THE MESSAGE OF BUDDHISM

Sabbadanam Dhammadanam Jināti

(The Gift of Truth Excels all other Gifts)

THE MESSAGE OF BUDDHISM

THE BUDDHA THE DOCTRINE THE ORDER

BY

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PREFACE

The Message of Buddhism is an adaptation of the *Buddhist Catechism* of the late Subhadra Bhikkhu which was first published in 1888 The eighth and last edition of the *Catechism* was translated into English by C T Strauss, and was published by the Mahā Bodhi Society in 1908 That edition is now out of print The Catechism was also translated into French, German, Dutch, Swedish, Italian, Bohemian, Hungarian, Russian, and Japanese

In this edition the question and answer form of the Catechism has been dispensed with, and the numerous notes appended to the 1908 edition have been incorporated into the book itself With the exception of these modifications, some minor corrections, and a few foot-notes, the text is that of the 1908 edition, which was approved and endorsed by the late Venerable H Sri Sumangala, who, writing to Mr C T Strauss, said

> "I have examined the *Buddhist Catechism* of Subhadra Bhikkhu, as translated by you, and find that it gives a correct version of the

essential points of the Buddhist Religion and presents the same in proper form. I therefore heartily recommend the work to all students of Buddhism"

The Venerable H. Sri Sumangala, who died in April, 1911, was, without doubt, the most learned and respected of all Bhikkhus of modern times. He was Pradhāna Nāyaka Thera (Chief High "Priest") of Sripāda (Adam's Peak), Western Province and Galle District, Honorary Member of the Royal Asiatic Society, Member of the Royal Asiatic Society, Ceylon Branch; President of the Mahā-Bodhi Society He was Principal and Founder of the Vidyodaya College in Colombo, the leading institution for the study of Buddhism, Pāli and Sanskrit in the Island of Ceylon He held the honorary title of Tripitaka Vagiswarāchariya, or Knower of the Tripitaka, a distinction that had not been conferred on anyone else for 400 years

This is a guarantee that in this work the true, unadulterated doctrines of Buddhism are faithfully presented.

The Editor's thanks are due to the Venerable the Anagarika H Dharmapala, General Secretary of the Mahā-Bodhi Society, and to Mr. C T Strauss, for permission to republish the work in its present form.

NAMO TASSA BHAGAVATO ARAHATO SAMMASĀMBUDDHASA !

(Glory be to Him, the Blessed One, the Holy One, the Utterly Enlightened !)

INTRODUCTION

A Buddhist is one who reveres the Buddha as the Enlightener of the world, our highest spiritual Guide and Master, and who earnestly strives to live according to His teachings

One becomes a Buddhist by free determination; not by birth, nor by nationality, nor race, not by consecration, baptism, or any other legally binding ceremony, for Buddhism possesses neither the power of a state religion, nor a hierarchy Whoever lives according to the teachings of the Buddha is a Buddhist, whether he belongs to a Buddhist congregation or not The entrance of such a one is effected by a simple declaration of intention and the utterance of the Formula of Guidance, which is:

I follow the Buddha as my Guide,
I follow the Doctrine as my Guide;
I follow the Order as my Guide

As this formula is always pronounced in Pāli, it is here given in that language:

Buddham saranam gacchāmi,
Dhammam saranam gacchāmi,
Sangham saranam gacchāmi

What is meant by the solemn utterance of this formula is that he who professes it desires to testify before all the world that he henceforth elects the Buddha as his teacher and model, that he knows the Doctrine to contain the essence and fundamental principles of truth and justice, as well as the road to self-perfection and deliverance, that he looks upon the Order as the successors of the Buddha, worthy of veneration as the practisers, promulgators, and expounders of the doctrine

The Formula of Guidance is binding on all Buddhists without exception, whether they belong to the Order, and therewith have chosen the life of a monk (bhikkhu), or novice (sāmanera), or whether they are lay followers (upāsaka) The profession of the Formula of Guidance is, however, a voluntary vow, and possesses only a moral validity. There are no legal obligations of any kind connected with it

The Holy Triad, to whose guidance the Buddhist confides in pronouncing this formula, is called the Three Gems They are the models of perfection,

the highest ideals of the Buddhist, and shine before him as guiding stars through the turbulent ocean of ignorance, passion, and sorrow to the haven of eternal peace Therefore, the Buddhist looks on these Three Gems full of confidence, gratitude, and reverence, and says with a devout heart :

All reverence to the Holy One, the World-enlightener, the Buddha ,

All reverence to the holy, pure, the liberating Doctrine ,

All reverence to the Brotherhood of the Elect, the noblest of mankind

It is a question often raised whether Buddhism should be called a religion or a philosophy It is in reality both In it the most lofty religio-moral doctrines are united with the deepest philosophical truths to form one inseparable whole Buddhism enlightens its followers as to the nature of the universe and the laws and forces reigning therein ; it discloses to man the essence of his being, shows him his true higher destiny, extending beyond this fleeting earth-life, awakens his slumbering moral forces and faculties, kindles in him a desire for the good and noble, teaches him to be humane, patient, unselfish, gives him consolation in sorrow, confidence while dying, and leads him to the highest aim of every living being, to emancipation, to consummation, to Nirvāna Therefore, Buddhism is a *religion*

It is at the same time a *philosophy*, for it demands of its adherents not blind faith, but a conviction

gained and confirmed by one's own investigation and examination, and by earnest reflection. Its doctrines are not based on the will of an incomprehensible god-creator, or upon a supernatural revelation, but on the natural constitution of the world and of life which are open to all It does not seek to frighten the evil-doer by the threat of eternal punishment, but to clear up the eye of the erring one, obscured by earthly delusion, so that he may be able to see the truth for himself; and it leads the honest struggler on the way to spiritual development and moral self-perfection up to a standpoint where everything transitory lies behind him as unsubstantial appearance, and where prejudice, doubt, and illusion disappear in the light of knowledge

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PRONUNCIATION OF PALI NAMES AND TERMS

a	as in map ;	ā	as in father ;	e	as in eight ;
i	as in hill ;	ī	as in machine,	o	as in home ;
u	as in good ;	ū	as in rule ;	ai	as eye ;
au	as in how ;	ñ	as ny ;	jn	as dny ;
ññ	as n-ny ;	ch	as in church ;	*m*	as ng

THE BUDDHA

The Buddha is He who, of His own strength, attained perfection, enlightenment, and deliverance in this life; the holy and wise Proclaimer of the Truth and Founder of the Buddhist Religion.

The Buddha is not a god who manifested himself to humanity, nor was He a god's messenger who came down upon earth in order to bring salvation to men He was born a human being, but such a one as appears only once in many thousands of years; one of those sublime world-subduers and world-enlighteners who mentally and morally tower so far above erring and suffering humanity that to the childlike perception of the people they appear as "gods" or "gods' messengers"

Buddha is not a proper name; it is the designation of an inner state or spiritual condition. It means the Awakened, or the Enlightened One; it designates a being who by His own power has acquired the highest wisdom and moral perfection attainable by a living being

The Buddha at His birth was called Siddattha. His family name was Gotama. His parents were

King Suddhodana and Queen Māyā.

King Suddhodana reigned over the tribe of the Sakyas in India. The Sakyas belonged to the great Aryan family of peoples, of which the European nations—Germanic, Romaic, and Slav—are also members The district occupied by them was situated in the north-eastern part of India, at the foot of the Himalayas, and the capital, Kapilavatthu, was about 100 miles north of the city of Benares, on the river Rohini.

Prince Siddattha was born on the full-moon day of the month of Wesak (May) in the year 544 before the beginning of the Christian era.

The books give us many details about the Buddha's birth and youth, but, as with all founders of great religions, the birth and youth of the Buddha have been adorned with many miraculous and poetic events.

The books tell us that already at the birth of Prince Siddattha the Brahmans who lived as priests and astrologers at the court of King Suddhodana predicted the child's high destiny. They prophesied If Prince Siddattha mounts the throne, he will become a king of kings, a world-ruler ; but if he renounces the throne and chooses the life of a recluse, he will become a world-subduer, a universal Buddha "And the hermit, Kāladevala, hastened from the wilderness of the Himalaya, threw himself at the feet of the child, and said : 'Verily, this child will one day become perfect, a supreme Buddha, and will show

unto men the way to emancipation,' and he wept, knowing that on account of his high age, he would not live to see that day."

But King Suddhodana did not rejoice in Kāladevala's prediction On the contrary, he tried by all means in his power to prevent its fulfilment, for he desired that Prince Siddhatta should one day become a universal monarch The Brahmans had told him that the sight of human suffering and earthly impermanence would induce the prince to abandon the world Therefore the king kept away from the prince everything that could give him knowledge of human misery and death He surrounded him with enjoyments and kingly splendour of every kind, so as to chain him firmly to a worldly life The most distinguished teachers had to instruct him in the arts and sciences, and in all knightly accomplishments befitting a king's son When Prince Siddattha reached manhood, his father had built for him three palaces, one for each of the three Indian seasons—the hot, the cold, and the rainy season All were furnished with the greatest luxury, all around them spread vast gardens and groves, with clear ponds full of lotus flowers, and grottoes, and beds of the most beautiful flowers In these gardens and groves the prince passed his youth, but he was never allowed to leave them, and all the poor, the sick, and the old were strictly prohibited from entering Sons of the noblest families in the land were his companions In his sixteenth year his father

married him to the Princess Yasodharā, and he was surrounded besides by a bevy of beautiful girls, skilled in dancing, singing, and music, according to the then custom of Indian princes.

It became possible for the prince, however, in the midst of all this splendour and delight, to think of flight from the world. Whilst driving in the gardens and parks of his palaces, he perceived four significant apparitions, which enlightened him as to the true nature of existence These were an infirm old man, a sick man covered with ulcers; a decaying corpse, and a venerable Bhikkhu.

The traditions tell us that when Prince Siddattha was driving in the park one day, he suddenly perceived an infirm old man, with back bent by the weight of years, who was creeping painfully along, leaning upon a staff Siddattha in astonishment asked his charioteer, Channa, what that strange being might be, and Channa answered that he was an old man "Was he born in this state?" further inquired the prince "No, Master, he was once young and blooming as thou" "Are there more such old men?" asked the prince in growing astonishment "Very many, Master" "And how did he arrive at this deplorable condition?" "It is the course of nature that all men must grow old and feeble, if they do not die young" "I also, Channa?" "Thou also, Master"

This incident made the prince so pensive that he gave orders to be driven home, having lost all pleasure

in the beautiful surroundings Some time after this, while driving again, he saw a leper, and when, in answer to his questions, Channa also explained this apparition to him, he was so deeply affected that thereafter he avoided all amusements and began to ponder over human misery In the course of time, the third apparition was perceived by him , he saw by the wayside a corpse in a state of decomposition Violently agitated, he returned home immediately, exclaiming · "Woe unto me, what is the use of kingly splendour, all pomp and all enjoyment, if they cannot guard me from old age, sickness, and death How unhappy is mankind Is there no way of forever ending suffering and death which are renewed with every birth ?" This question occupied him henceforth uninterruptedly The answer thereto came to him at a subsequent drive There appeared to him a venerable ascetic in yellow garb, as worn by the Buddhist Brethren, whose features clearly reflected his deep, inner peace. This apparition showed to the prince, troubled with the enigma of existence, the way on which he had to seek its solution. Henceforth the resolution matured within him to leave the world, and to step on the path which every one must travel who strives for perfection.

This allegorical narrative is evidently not to be taken literally, but it is full of a deep inner truth, for it teaches us that it is only insight into the transitoriness and vanity of life which leads susceptible natures to retirement from the world and to re-

nunciation, to that total change of mind which all saints and world-vanquishers have experienced, and which the worldly minded do not comprehend.

These appearances affected Prince Siddattha deeply. The utter transitoriness of life now became clear to him. The delusive and short earthly enjoyments, which bring old age, sickness, pain, and death in their train, lost all attractions for him. Henceforth he abstained from all amusements. The conviction ripened within him that existence is not a blessing, but the reverse, and that it is foolish and unworthy of noble natures to pursue sensual pleasures. All his aspirations were now directed to a higher aim. He longed to discover the causes of misery in the world , of birth, suffering, old age, and re-birth, and to find an end to them.

The doctrine of re-birth—that is, the repeated embodiment of the inner essence of man—is the oldest and most venerable belief of the human race, the primitive knowledge of religion which almost forces itself on the unbiassed intellect, if not inoculated in early youth with false doctrines, and clouded by prejudice. In the religions of all civilized nations, with the exception of the Jewish-Christian and Mahommedan, it forms the foundation stone on which all the other doctrines are based. And even in Christian countries, in spite of the pressure of the Church and threatened persecution, many great minds have secretly adhered to it. It alone is able to free us from the delusion that man is a creature

called into being out of nothingness by the alrbitrary will of a god, and that he must withal be grateful for so doubtful a gift as life.

The doctrine of re-birth alone gives back to man his true liberty and self-determination which can never exist with an all-powerful god-creator; it alone rests on true justice, and only in it the word of the Christian saint, Paul, becomes true. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that also shall he reap" The doctrine of re-birth alone solves the riddle of existence, explains satisfactorily why the righteous are often poor and despised, while evil-doers enjoy riches and honour, and answers the hopeless question which rises vainly to heaven from millions of tortured human hearts. Why must we suffer so much? It explains that our inner being is indestructible, just as matter and the forces of nature. Of our own will, deluded by the craving for existence, we have entered this life and continued it in constantly changing forms since the very beginning of things until this very day Death is not annihilation, still less deliverance or consummation, but merely a transition from one perishable form to another. He who finds satisfaction in life may be confident that no god and no devil can deprive him of it. Man's fate depends alone on his inner being, on his own will, for which innumerable re-births are still in prospect, in which he will reap the fruits of his good and evil deeds To him, however, who is earnestly weary of constantly renewed existence with its

sorrows and joys, the way to deliverance is open. Let him only tread it with firm resolution, and he will of his own power attain that sublime goal, where the individuality, which by its very nature is necessarily limited, full of sorrow and error, will completely dissolve in Nirvāna This is the bliss, the eternal peace, which all living beings consciously or unconsciously desire, but which, blinded by delusion, they cannot find

Prince Siddattha decided to leave the world, and to go into the wilderness like the venerable ascetic who had appeared to him. It was not easy for him to take such a resolution, for he had to renounce all that men generally consider the greatest happiness—a king's throne, power, honour, riches, and all enjoyments connected therewith, and even the companionship of his beloved wife and of their son, Rāhula, who had just been born

The prince decided to leave secretly, for he feared that the entreaties of his aged father, and the tears of his wife might make him waver. Queen Māyā no longer lived She died seven days after the birth of the prince Thus, one night when all were asleep, he arose quietly, took a last farewell glance at his wife and infant son, woke Channa, ordered him to saddle his favourite horse, Kanthaka, and rode away He passed the guards at the gate without being noticed, and sallied forth into the darkness as fast as his steed would carry him. Having reached the top of a hill, he looked back on his native city. Then

Mārā, the Tempter, approached him. He showed him the kingdoms of the earth, represented to him once more all the allurements of power and splendour, and promised him the sovereignty over the whole world, if he would desist from his purpose.

Mārā, the tempter and prince of this world, the demon of passions, of lust, and of death, in short, the personification of evil, plays in Buddhist legend about the same part as the Christian Satan, the prince of darkness According to the evangelical legend, Jesus was also tempted by the devil in the wilderness, just as the Buddha by Mārā. In fact, the life of Jesus, as related in the gospels, corresponds so strikingly in many essential points with the life of the Buddha, of which a short abstract only is given here, that one is involuntarily driven to the conclusion that the life of the Buddha served as a model to the compilers of the life of Jesus of Nazareth

The Buddha rejected the Tempter with scorn His resolution could not be shaken And the books say · "Henceforth Mārā followed the steps of the Tathāgata*, hoping to find another opportunity to cause his fall"

Prince Siddattha was twenty-nine years of age when he left the world

He went first to the river Anomā There he cut off his beautiful, long hair with his sword, handed his arms, ornaments, and horse to his faithful Channa, and directed him to return with them to Kapilavatthu,

* *Tathagata*, one of the titles of the Buddha, meaning "One who walks in the footsteps of his predecessors," *i.e.*, the Buddhas who preceded Him.

and to re-assure the king and the princess as to his fate. After Channa had left him, he passed seven days in solitude on the bank of the Anomā, entirely given up to contemplation, filled with holy joy at having taken the first important step towards the realisation of his aim, and at having stripped off the fetters of a worldly life Then he put on yellow robes and walked towards Rājagaha, the capital of the kingdom of Magadha

With this momentous step the story of Prince Siddattha ceases, and there begins the historical career of the Recluse Gotama, whom his contemporaries later called the Awakened One, the Buddha

The Perfect One expressed Himself to His disciples only occasionally, in short, simple sentences, as to the reasons which induced Him to abandon the worldly life. Thus we read "There are two goals, Oh disciples, the holy goal and the unholy goal And what is the unholy goal? There, one who is himself subject to birth, old age, sickness, death, sorrow, and sin* seeks what is also subject to birth, old age, sickness, death, sorrow, and sin, namely, wife and child, man-servants and maid-servants, hearth and home, gold and silver. This, oh disciples, is the unholy goal. I also, oh disciples, acted thus, while still searching for the truth, before I had become an Awakened One, a Buddha. Then the thought arose within me, instead of the transitory and sorrow-

* *Sin*, in the Buddhist sense, is not an offence against a god or a divine law, it is impurity of thought or mind, the result of avijjā—ignorance, unenlightenment

ful which I had comprehended as evil, to seek deliverance from birth, old age, sickness, death, sorrow, and sin, the peerless security, Nirvāna This is the holy goal. And after a time, young, strong, dark-haired, in the first bloom of manhood, with short hair and beard, and clad in the yellow garment, I went forth from home into homelessness." And in another place, after speaking to His disciples of the splendour and pomp which had surrounded Him in His palaces, He continued "By such affluence, ye disciples, was I surrounded, in such magnificence dwelt I Then there awoke in me this thought A foolish, ordinary person, although himself subject to old age, sickness, and death, feels repugnance, abhorrence, and loathing when he sees an old man, a sick person, or a corpse This repugnance, however, turns against himself, for he also is subject to old age, sickness, and death As I thought thus, ye disciples, all juvenile ardour perished within me"

Prince Siddattha went to Rājagaha for the reason that there dwelt in the neighbourhood two Brahmans, Ālāra Kālāma and Uddaka, renowned for wisdom He joined first one and then the other as disciple under the name of Gotama These Brahmans taught that mystic meditation and direct intuition of the Absolute are the roads to emancipation.

Gotama did not find this teaching correct He acquired all the knowledge of the two Brahmans, and zealously joined in all their religious exercises without getting any nearer to his goal He soon

found that their knowledge was futile, and would not lead to deliverance from suffering, death, and re-birth.

Already, centuries before the birth of the Buddha, there existed brahmanic penitents, hermits, and ascetics in India They lived together in small huts in the forest, devoted to the study of the holy, mystic writings (Upanishads) of the Vedas, or as recluses in caves and under trees Many wandered from place to place as homeless ascetics, begging their food before the doors, and giving themselves up to the most painful self-tortures, in order forcibly to kill all sensual emotions, to liberate the soul from all earthly ties, and to obtain union with the Eternal—Brahman These Brahmans, celebrated religious teachers, believed that the true way to emancipation was through asceticism, namely, the complete and forcible mortification of all emotions pertaining to the senses, of the will and of the passions Gotama now decided to follow their precepts For this purpose he retired to a thick forest near Uruvelā, and applied himself in solitude to the severest penances and self-tortures

This spot, where the Buddha dwelt for many years as an ascetic, and where He also attained Enlightenment, was later called Buddha-Gayā, that is, the hermitage of the Buddha Temples and monasteries arose there, which a thousand years later, when Buddhism had spread over all Central and Eastern Asia, were inhabited by numerous monks, and formed

a chief place of pilgrimage for devotees from all Buddhist countries. Even to-day a partly ruined temple, which has lately been restored, and which is to be made the centre of Buddhist propaganda, marks the consecrated spot

Soon the fame of Gotama's holy life spread, and brought him five companions, who pursued the same aim. In admiration of the fortitude and the endurance with which Gotama devoted himself to his castigations, they remained with him, expecting that he would surely some day attain emancipation Then they intended to become his disciples Their names were Kondañña, Bhaddiya, Vappa, Mahānāma, and Assaji

Gotama remained in the forest near Uruvelā nearly six years The strength of his body dwindled with continual self-tortures, fastings, and vigils, but he did not flag in his endeavour One night, walking up and down in deep meditation, he sank to the ground unconscious from sheer exhaustion, so that his companions thought him dead After some time he recovered He did not thereafter continue his ascetic practices He understood that asceticism never leads to perfection and to deliverance He had almost sacrificed himself and still not attained his aim—spiritual and moral self-perfection He therefore relinquished all real mortification, and took food again regularly When his companions saw this, they began to doubt him; they thought he had forsaken his resolution, and they abandoned him

Not only the sublime founder of Buddhism, but also many Christian saints of earlier times had, by personal experience, to arrive at the knowledge that asceticism does not lead to salvation "By mere mortification," says Nagāsena, the great apostle of Buddhism, "one does not even attain a fortunate re-birth, much less emancipation" And we read: "A knife grasped at the edge wounds the hand Wrongly practised asceticism leads to the downward path" Hence Buddhism rejects every kind of self-torture and "mortification of the flesh" as useless and injurious, and aims only at the purification of the heart and will of all passions and evil tendencies, and at the development of insight and the higher mental powers of man

Gotama did not for a moment despair of gaining his aim Deserted by all, he understood that salvation could not be attained by the doctrines taught by others, and he resolved in future to follow only his own inspiration He had realised that self-mortification was injurious, and he confined himself henceforth to strict abstinence from all sensuality, at the same time he strove in perfect seclusion for revelation from within, for the complete unfolding of his higher spiritual powers One night he sat under a tree, not far from the shores of the river Nerañjarā It was under this tree that he victoriously accomplished his last and severest struggle

This tree is called by Buddhists Bodhi—or Bo-tree, that is Tree of Wisdom, by naturalists *Ficus*

Religiosa. An offshoot of this same tree is still flourishing near the temple of Buddha-Gayā Another sprig was taken to Ceylon by the Princess Sanghamitta, daughter of the Emperor Asoka, and planted at Anurādhapura, the former capital of the island. It is still in full growth, and is the oldest historical tree in the world.

Gotama's last and severest struggle was against the inclinations and desires of the human heart, which arose once more within him, although he believed that he had completely conquered them, the struggle against delusion, love of the world, and that craving for existence and enjoyment, that "will-to-live," which are the root and mainspring of our being, as well as the source of all our woes. Once more, honour, fame, power, wealth, love, happiness of family life, and all the delights and joys which the world offers to its favourites, presented themselves to him in their most seductive form, once more gnawing doubt raised its serpent head But firmly determined to die rather than renounce his aim, Gotama struggled with these dire powers and gained the victory

The Buddhist Scriptures, in a magnificent, brilliantly coloured allegory, represent this inward struggle of the solitary Sage, as a fight of Gotama and Mārā Mārā recognises that the decisive moment has arrived. He approaches Gotama, seated under the Bodhi-tree in deep meditation, and once more offers him sovereignty over the whole world Gotama repels him with scorn, he is no longer susceptible to

the allurements of ambition. Mārā now becomes enraged, and summons his hosts, the destroying powers of nature, to attack the audacious One, who is about to wrest from him the dominion over human hearts. All the elements are set in an uproar Thunder crashes, lightning flashes, an earthquake shakes the continent, torrents of rain pour down and threaten to drown everything, a hurricane uproots the strongest trees, and pieces of rock rolling down from the mountains menace to crush the Sage, who, calm in the midst of these horrors, and heedless of danger, continues his meditation Even the fear of death no longer moves him Then Mārā has recourse to his last and most dangerous weapon He sends his magically beautiful daughters, Tanhā, Arāti, and Rāga (craving desire, hatred, and sensuality) These put forth all their skill to ensnare the solitary recluse, while the surroundings are transformed into a fairy grove But Gotama penetrates their real nature, and turns with loathing from the tempting forms. This decides the battle Mārā flees filled with despair · he feels that his throne is tottering The World-Subduer has wrested from him the dominion over human hearts

And now, after the last attack of human weakness had been overcome, and the deep peace of Nirvāna had entered his heart, Gotama's spirit rose to that sublime height where the struggler attains supreme enlightenment. He had reached the goal—the veil had fallen from his eyes, the highest insight had been won He had become perfect—a Buddha

Enlightenment, in the Buddhist sense, is not to be understood as a miraculous or mystic occurrence caused by the influence of extra-mundane, divine powers, but that direct apprehension of the truth, that intuitive penetration into the nature of things which only differs from the intuition of the artistic genius in degree, not in kind, representing only a higher step of the same

Gotama, the Buddha, now understood the causes of misery, of birth, suffering, old age, death, and re-birth "He had obtained the pure, spotless Eye of the Truth," as the books express it, and He understood, not only the cause of the arising and passing away of beings, the cause of suffering, death, and re-birth, but also the means to put an end to all suffering, to escape the continual rotation of birth and death, and to reach deliverance—Nirvāna

The Buddha remained at the foot of the Bodhi-tree for seven days in deep meditation Then He arose and went to the Ajapāla fig-tree (the tree of the goat-herds) There the thought occurred to Him · "I now comprehend this liberating doctrine, so difficult to perceive and to understand, which brings quietude of heart, which is exalted, intelligible only to the wise Shall I proclaim it ? Mankind is given to desire, intent upon desire, delighting in desire Most difficult for it to understand will be the moral constitution of the world, the law of the concatenation of cause and effect ; it will not want to hear the doctrine of the renouncement of the will-to-

live, of the subduing of desires and passions, and of the Path to deliverance If I proclaim the doctrine, and other men are not able to understand my preaching, there would result but weariness and anguish to me."

The Buddha rejected these thoughts as unworthy of Himself Compassion with erring and suffering humanity induced Him to take upon Himself the burden of a long earthly life and the difficult task of a herald of Truth. With the words "Open to all be the gate of deliverance; let all who have ears hear the Law and follow it," He arose, left His hermitage, and took the road to Benares

The Buddha first proclaimed the Doctrine to the five ascetics who had dwelt with Him so long and had deserted Him when He abandoned His self-mortifications He found them in a grove near the city of Benares, in the deer park Isipatana The five ascetics at first intended not to hear Him, as they considered Him an apostate; but the majesty of His appearance, the exalted expression of His countenance, made such a mighty impression on them that they involuntarily bowed down before Him and listened to his words with deep reverence

This first discourse of the Buddha is called "The Setting in Motion of the Wheel* of the Law," or "The Foundation of the Kingdom of Righteousness." This sermon contains in concise terms the funda-

* The Wheel, in Buddhism, symbolises the Samsāra—the succession of births' deaths, and re-births, rolling on in a circle, it represents sensate life as opposed to Nirvāna

mental points of the whole doctrine

The effect of this discourse upon the five ascetics was that they acknowledged the Buddha as the Enlightener of the World, and desired to become His disciples And the Awakened One admitted them as the first into the Brotherhood of the Elect (Sangha) with the words "Welcome, oh Brethren; well taught is the Doctrine Lead henceforth a holy life for the sake of the complete extinction of suffering"

The first of the five disciples to attain perfect insight was the aged Kondañña He obtained the pure, the spotless Eye of the Truth, and reached the degree of Arahan, which means he who has reached the fourth and highest degree of holiness, and therewith Nirvāna The four others soon followed

The Buddha gained many other disciples in Benares The next one to be converted was Yasa, a youth of noble family But not only Brahmans, noblemen and gentlefolk lent an ear to the word of the Sublime One, but also the plain people, for He made no distinction of caste, rank, or station, as the Brahman priests did, but preached to all who were willing to listen After five months the number of disciples already amounted to sixty, not counting the lay followers Thereupon "The Sending Forth of the Brethren" took place The Buddha assembled the Brethren about Him and commanded them to wander forth singly into the world, and to proclaim the doctrine of emancipation everywhere Only because the Buddha Himself instructed the disciples

in the Doctrine, and that they were mostly Brahmans, and men who had already passed their whole lives in self-denial, meditation, and holy striving for emancipation, was it possible for them to go forth as itinerant preachers in the short space of five months

The Buddha spake unto the Brethren. "Ye are delivered from all fetters, human and divine. Go forth, oh Brethren, and wander about, and proclaim the Law for the deliverance of all living beings, out of compassion for the world, for the joy, for the bliss, for the welfare of gods and men Proclaim, oh Brethren, the doctrine glorious, preach ye a life of holiness, perfect and pure There are many of pure heart and good intentions These will be your adherents and the followers of Truth"

In the above quotation the "gods" referred to are the Brahman gods, who certainly, like all other gods worshipped in the five continents, stand in need of salvation through the progressive intelligence of mankind Buddhism does not deny gods, nor does it attribute to them any special importance · it simply does not need them, neither as a prop to its ethics, nor for the attainment of salvation Whoever wishes to believe in gods may do so, only he must not forget that the gods, like all living beings, are perishable and subject to re-birth, though their lives may last for millions of our years, and that the saint who has reached perfection, and above all, the Buddha, are far superior to all gods

The Buddha returned from Benares to Uruvelā,

where dwelt many Brahmans in huts, keeping up the holy fire and performing the sacrificial rites prescribed by the Vedas To these He preached of the consuming fires of passion, sensuality, and desire, and He gained many of them as disciples and followers Then He proceeded to Rājagaha, where He converted King Bimbisāra and a large number of noblemen Thus the Doctrine spread further and further

From Rājagaha the Buddha wandered to Kapilavatthu, and the fame of His works preceded Him. He did not go to the king's palace, but remained with the Brethren who were with Him in a grove near the city, as prescribed by the regulations of the Brotherhood There King Suddhodana and all His male kindred went to greet Him. But when they saw Him in the poor garb of a Bhikkhu, with shorn hair and beard, they felt ashamed of Him The next morning, the Buddha, according to the custom of the Order, took His alms-bowl and went into the city, for the purpose of collecting His food before the house doors The alms-bowl of the Buddhist Bhikkhus is an earthern, wooden, or metal bowl, which every member of the Brotherhood always carries with him, and in which their daily food is collected Even the Buddha never deviated from this rule When invited to dine at the house of a lay disciple (upāsaka) He even there always dined out of His own alms-bowl.

When the king, His father, heard this, he hastened to Him and said in words of reproach: "My son, why dost thou disgrace me so, asking for gifts like a

beggar?" The Buddha replied: "Great king, this has ever been the custom of my Ancestors." King Suddhodana, however, did not understand Him, and exclaimed: "We spring from a race of kings and warriors, and not one of them has ever abased himself so far as to beg his daily bread." Whereupon the Sublime One smiled and spake: "Thou and thine justly glory in being descended from a race of kings. *My* Ancestors, however, are the Buddhas of past ages, and they did even as I am doing." Then King Suddhodana was silent.

In the distant ages of the past, into whose darkness no historical researches can penetrate, there also arose world-enlightening Buddhas, who proclaimed the Law of Deliverance; for salvation, like error, guilt, and suffering, is always present. The feasibility to attain salvation is never lacking to the man who earnestly strives for wisdom and deliverance. Whenever the pure doctrine threatens to deteriorate completely, and mankind is about to be sunk in sensual desires and spiritual darkness, a new Buddha is born. The last of these Buddhas, the Light of our age, was the Buddha Gotama, whose Law we are following.

On the very same day, the Buddha went to see the Princess Yasodharā, accompanied by two of His disciples, for no member of the Brotherhood may enter the domicile of a woman alone. When Yasodharā saw Him in the garb of a begging-monk, she could not utter a word, but sank down before Him, clasped His

knees, and wept bitterly. Then the Buddha lifted her up, comforted her, and instructed her in the Doctrine in gentle words And His words found a loving abode in her heart. And when the Buddha had gone, Yasodharā clothed her son, Rāhula, in his finest garments, and sent him to the Exalted One, that the prince might ask his father for his heritage

"The Exalted One" is an expression often used to designate the Buddha In the books of Buddhism there are found a number of others, all expressing a quality of the Buddha. Thus He is called "the Sage of the Sakya race," "the Holy One," and "the Blessed One," because He is free from the "Will-to-live," from all passions and desires, "the Perfect One," because, after a long struggle with error and earthly desires, He has attained perfection, "the Awakened One," because, awakened out of the dream of this life, there arose within Him under the Bodhi-tree the highest wisdom, "the World-Conqueror," because He conquered Mārā, the prince of this world, of sensuality, of death and darkness, the tempter of all beings, and, finally, "the World-Enlightener," because He not only freed Himself, but proclaimed the liberating Doctrine to all, and shed the light of Truth over the whole world.

The young prince Rāhula went up to the Buddha and said. "Father, I shall some day be king and occupy the throne of the Sakyas Give unto me, therefore, my inheritance." Then the Enlightened One took him by the hand, led him out of the city

to the Nigrodha grove, where He and the disciples had taken up their abode, and spake thus to Rāhula: "Thou demandest of me an heritage which is subject to impermancy and leads to suffering. Such an one I have no longer to bestow. But the treasures which I have gained under the Tree of Wisdom shall be thine. This is the splendid heritage which I bequeath unto thee; this none can wrest from thee." And thereupon He bade Sāriputta adopt Rāhula into the Brotherhood of the Elect. Besides Rāhula, many relatives of the Buddha were admitted to the Order among them Ānanda, Devadatta, and Anuraddha. The most prominent disciples besides these were Sāriputta, Moggāllana, Kassapa, Upāli, and Kachchāna.

The Buddha remained in Kapilavatthu four months of the rainy season, in the second year of His Buddhahood. Then He departed to continue His work in other places.

The Buddha preached the Doctrine for forty-five years in all, until His death. During all this time, for eight months of every year, He wandered from village to village, from town to town, from country to country, always accompanied by a multitude of disciples, and everywhere instructing the people by discourses, exhortations, and parables. The four months of the rainy season, however, He always spent in one place, either in the house of one of His followers, or in groves and parks which had been presented to the Brotherhood by rich adherents.

The rainy season in India is the time for the reviving of animal and plant life. A northerner can hardly form a conception in what enormous abundance animal and plant germs develop after the very first rainy days, which during the withering dryness of the hot season had been lying in a state of coma, comparable to the hibernation of northern climes. It is then impossible to work in woods or fields without destroying animal or plant life Therefore the Buddha did not wander about during the rainy season, and also forbade it to His disciples, except in cases of urgent necessity.

The Buddha preferred to dwell in the bamboo grove (Veluvana) near Rājagaha, a former park of King Bimbisāra, which he had given to the Brotherhood, and in the Jeta park (Jetavana) near Savatthi, a gift of the rich merchant, Anāthapindika In both of them, monasteries (vihāras) for the Bhikkhus had been erected These places are famous in the history of Buddhism, for it was here that the Exalted One delivered most of the discourses recorded in the books

In these forty-five years Buddhism became firmly established, the fame of the Master and the Doctrine of Deliverance spread extensively; persons of all classes, weary of worldly vanity and priestly imposture, took the higher vows and entered the Order, and thousands declared themselves lay followers of the Blessed One

To this day Buddhism has still more adherents than Christianity of all denominations together,

namely, some 450 millions, therefore, nearly one-third of the entire human race, although in the last 1,500 years the propagation of its doctrines has been at a standstill A hundred years before the birth of Christ the disciples of the Enlightener of the World had already advanced east and west, far beyond the boundaries of India, and in the city of Alexandria, in Bactria, dwelt many Brethren and lay followers It is therefore, very probable that Jesus of Nazareth, whose teachings in some respects contain much intrinsic agreement with those of Buddhism, was a pupil of Buddhist monks from his twelfth to his thirtieth year, of which time the Gospels have nothing to report about him He then returned to his home to promulgate the Doctrine to his people This doctrine of Jesus was subsequently mutilated and mixed with passages from the law books of the Jews The fundamental ethical doctrines of Christianity are probably of Buddhist origin Now, when the Church cannot any more silence heretics with the rack and stake, the time has arrived for Europe and America, when the Western descendants of the Aryans can hear and understand the unadulterated doctrine of the Buddha This will be the religion of the future, for it alone is not a matter of belief, as all "revealed" religions, but a doctrine of knowledge and conviction , it is the religion of a free, noble, self-relying humanity, that desires no divine grace, and fears no divine wrath, and that sees the judge of its actions only in its own heart, in its

own higher wisdom

During His career, the Buddha was not subjected to persecution or hostility on the part of the dominant brahmanic religion , for, as Buddhism, so true Brahmanism is free from all intolerance and religious fanaticism But one of His own disciples, Devadatta, rose up against Him Infatuated by ambition, he wanted to usurp the direction of the Brotherhood in place of the aged Master , and when he failed in this, he even attempted to take the Buddha's life But all his plots miscarried

Of the Buddha's last days, and His death, the Scripture called the Book of the Great Decease gives a detailed account, relating to the passing of the Enlightened One into the Eternal Peace (Parinirvāna)

The book tells us that, when the Blessed One had reached His eightieth year, He felt His strength failing But he still wandered on from place to place, as was His custom , and one day He addressed Ānanda as follows " Oh Ānanda, I am now grown old and full of years, my journey is drawing to its close, I have reached the sum of my days I am turned eighty years of age " Thereupon Ānanda was seized with great sorrow , but the Buddha consoled him and said " Oh Ānanda, have I not often declared to thee that it is in the very nature of all things, howsoever dear and beloved they may be to us, that we must divide ourselves from them, leave them, sever ourselves from them ? Anything born, brought into being, and formed, contains within itself

the inherent necessity of dissolution. How then can it be possible that such a being, even though he be a Buddha, should not be dissolved? No state of permanence can exist In three months from this very day I shall enter into the Eternal Peace Therefore, oh Brethren, ye to whom the truths I have perceived have been made known by me, make them entirely your own, practise them, meditate upon them, and spread them abroad, in order that pure religion may last long and be perpetuated, in order that it may continue to be for the good and happiness of the great multitudes, out of pity for the world, to the good, and the gain, and the weal of gods and men Whoso faithfully perseveres on this road to holiness will safely cross the ocean of life and reach that sublime goal where all suffering ceases"

Although growing weaker and harassed by pain, the Perfect One continued His wanderings, everywhere gathering the Brethren and lay followers about Him, and exhorting them to unswerving perseverance on the path of emancipation

When Ānanda one day asked Him for instructions about the Order, the Blessed One replied: "Oh Ānanda, should there be any one who harbours the thought, 'It is I who will lead the Brotherhood,' or 'The Order is dependent upon me,' it is he who should lay down instructions in any matter concerning the Order. Now the Tathāgata, Ānanda, thinks not that it is he who should lead the Brotherhood, or that the Order is dependent upon him."

In Pāvā, the Blessed One halted in the mango grove of Chunda, a man of the caste of the smiths And when Chunda heard this he joyfully hastened there, invited the Tathāgata to his house and entertained him with rice, sweetened bread, and a dish of edible mushrooms. The Buddha ate of the mushrooms, and ordered the smith not to give any to his disciples, but to throw the rest away. And, after having cheered and edified Chunda by religious instruction, He wandered on to Kusinārā On the way, He was attacked by a severe illness, and violent pains afflicted Him, but the Exalted One, strong in mind and full of self-control, endured them without complaint. But soon His weakness became so great that He was obliged to rest under a tree by the road side And He spake to Ānanda. "Bring me some water, Ānanda, I am thirsty." Ānanda did as the Sublime One wished, and the Buddha drank and became refreshed

In the Pāli text the dish which Chunda offered to the Tathāgata is called "sukaramāddavam"—edible mushrooms, not "boar's meat," as it is usually translated. The error arose in the following manner Already the oldest Indian commentators did not understand the word correctly. The proper meaning, which probably was purely local, had been lost. "Sukaro" signifies wild pig, boar, "maddavam," what is tender, agreeable, palatable; but the combination of the two words gives a doubtful meaning. In spite of many contrary reasons, the opinion was finally almost universally accepted that

it must mean boar's meat This is, however, an error. It is not to be translated "What is agreeable or palatable *of* the boar," but "what is agreeable, palatable *to* the boar": freely translated—"boar's delight," or "wild pig's joy" This figurative sense had been given in the Magadha country, in the time of the Buddha, to a species of edible mushrooms, which are sought for by the Indian boars as eagerly as truffles are by the boars in Europe Among the mushrooms prepared by Chunda for the Tathāgata there were some poisonous ones The Buddha noticed this Thus also is explained in the most natural manner why the Master ordered the smith not to give any to the disciples, but to throw away the rest as unfit for food

Now, it happened that young Pukkusa, a merchant of the tribe of the Mallas, passed along the road with a caravan of carts And when he saw the Blessed One seated under a tree, he approached Him, and bowed down before Him Then he ordered one of his servants to bring a couple of costly garments of burnished cloth of gold, and said "Oh Lord, show me the favour of accepting these robes at my hands" The Buddha answered "In that case, Pukkusa, give one of the robes to me and one to Ānanda." Then Ānanda clothed the Buddha in one of the golden garments, whereupon it seemed completely to have lost its lustre Surprised, Ānanda exclaimed "Lord, so radiant is thy countenance, and so clear, that this robe of burnished cloth of gold seems to have

completely lost its splendour" And the Buddha replied · "It is as thou sayest, Ānanda. Twice during His earthly career the countenance of the Tathāgata appears so bright and clear—in the night when He attains complete enlightenment, and in the one in which he passes to the Eternal Peace And this very night, Ānanda, in the third watch of the night, the utter passing away (Parinirvāna) of the Tathāgata will take place"

Out of this occurrence the legend has made a "transfiguration," though the plain meaning of it is obvious Before the spiritual light radiating from the countenance of a Buddha, all the lustre of earth's gold pales. The multitude, however, always snatches at the miraculous

The Buddha then gave instructions to Ānanda to pacify Chunda's remorse for having given Him bad food, by telling him that, on the contrary, his having given the Buddha His last meal would redound to his good fortune So thoughtful was the Blessed One, even in dire pain, and shortly before His death

Thereupon, the Enlightened One rose, and proceeded with His disciples to the Sāla grove of the Mallas, near Kusinārā, on the bank of the Hiraññavati And He spake to Ānanda "I pray you, Ānanda, spread for me a robe on the seat between the twin Sāla trees. I am weary and would lie down" "Even so, Lord," answered Ānanda, and he prepared for the Exalted One a couch between the Sāla trees, with the head to the north And the Buddha laid Himself

down. And lo and behold! the twin Sāla trees were all one mass of bloom, although it was not the season for flowers; like rain they showered their blooms over the Blessed One, and celestial melodies resounded in the air. Then spake the dying Sage. "Behold, what a spectacle! Heaven and earth vie with each other to honour the Tathāgata. But this is not the right adoration, the right veneration, the right glorification due to a Buddha Those of my disciples and lay followers who ever live in the spirit and the truth, and faithfully follow the precepts of righteous conduct, those only render me the right honour, the right glorification"

The wonderfulness of this occurrence is incidental, the allegorical form, in order to impress the adherents most forcibly with the fact that the Buddha esteems very lightly even divine worship offered to His person, that He cannot be honoured by praise, glory, and thanks, by empty words and vain pageantry, but solely by faithful observance of His precepts To be sure, as everywhere and always, the mass of the people in Buddhist countries also prefer doing the former, for it is easy to praise the Master, but difficult to imitate Him.

Now at this time a mendicant named Subhadda, who was not a believer in the Buddha, heard that the final passing away of the Enlightened One would take place that night And having some doubts whether other teachers had found the truth, he resolved to ask the Tathāgata. At first Ānanda did

not want to admit him into the presence of the Blessed One, for fear of causing Him annoyance in His last moments But the Exalted One, hearing Ānanda's refusal, gave orders to allow Subhadda to enter, and when the latter had stated his doubts, the Blessed One said "In whatsoever doctrine and discipline, Subhadda, the Noble Eightfold Path is found, in that is also found the man of true saintliness." Subhadda was converted and asked to be admitted into the Order, which prayer was granted by the Buddha, so that Subhadda became the last disciple whom the Blessed One Himself converted.

The Buddha thus showed most unmistakably what He considered the essence of His teaching—not metaphysical speculations, but a pure and holy life.

And the Sublime One once again turned to His disciples and said "It may be that after my demise in some of you the thought may arise—The lips of our Master are closed, we have no longer a guide But it is not thus, Brothers, that you should regard it The Doctrine which I have taught you, and the rules of pure living which I have laid down for you, these shall be, after I am gone, your guide and master"

And the Blessed One further ordained · "When I am gone, let the Order, if it should so wish, abolish all the lesser and the minor precepts"

This declaration, and the disavowal of wanting to leave special directions for the Order, demonstrates the truly marvellous modesty and humility of the

Exalted One at the close of a long and successful career. The injunction about the minor precepts also shows that He did not attach particular importance to them .

After a short time the Buddha once more raised His voice and said: "Behold now, oh Brethren, I exhort you decay is inherent in all compound things Work out your salvation with diligence"

These were the Master's last words Then He entered into Parinirvāna

Before the eastern gate of Kusinārā, the chiefs of the Mallas cremated the Body of the Light of the World with all the honour due to a universal monarch

THE DOCTRINE

(Dhamma)

The Doctrine consists of the Truth as intuitively seen and proclaimed by the Buddha, which has been preserved for us by tradition through the Arahans, and recorded in the Scriptures

The Scriptures of the Buddhists are called the Three Pitakas, or Collections (Tripitaka): Sutta Pitaka, Vinaya Pitaka, and Abhidhamma Pitaka

The Sutta Pitaka contains the discourses, sermons, and sayings of the Buddha, which are destined for the Brethren as well as for the lay-followers (upāsaka), also a number of parables and aphorisms for the better elucidation of the Doctrine The Vinaya Pitaka contains the regulations and rules of conduct for the Brotherhood of the Elect, the Bhikkhus, and the Samanera (novices) The Abhidhamma Pitaka contains religio-philosophical and psychological treatises

These three collections do not contain divine revelations. There are no divine revelations Buddhism totally rejects the supposition that the truth should be disclosed or revealed to a favoured or

elected one by a god or angel Mankind has never received any revelations except from the mouth of their sages, those sublime teachers of humanity who by their own strength have raised themselves to mental and moral perfection, the greatest of whom are called world-enlightening Buddhas The last of these Lights of the World was the Buddha Gotama, what He has perceived and proclaimed is contained in the Pitakas

We need such world-enlightening Buddhas on account of our sufferings and our ignorance

Because we do not understand the true nature of the universe, because we are ignorant of the working of the moral world-order, we cling blindly to life, and get continually entangled anew in guilt, sorrow, and re-birth Because we are deluded by earthly glamour, we strive for objects that are of value only in our imagination, and produce more pain than pleasure we prize highly what is vain and transitory, grieve over events that do not deserve our interest, and rejoice over what harms us and may even cause our undoing Because we do not possess the right insight, we attach ourselves to perishable things, involve ourselves in strife and hardship in the struggle for existence, and completely lose sight of our true welfare Thus our entire life is an endless chain of unfulfilled wishes, painful deceptions, and cruel disappointments, of passions and desires which miss their object, or if gratified for a short time, continually burst open again like badly-healed wounds,

undermine our bodily and mental forces, and keep us in an incessant state of suffering, from which there is no escape for the ignorant and deluded

To be sure, suffering and the vanity of life awaken in noble natures the longing for deliverance, but ignorance prevents our finding by our own powers the way out of this Samsāra Therefore we need the Master to show it to us

Samsāra (literally, "wandering") is the world in which we live, the world of error, guilt, birth, suffering, and death, the world of becoming and decay, of continual change, of disappointment and sorrow, of the perpetual, never-ending succession of re-births.

The cause of birth, suffering, death, and re-birth, is the all-pervading wrong desire (tanhā—thirst), the craving for sensate existence in this or another world (heaven or paradise), or the desire for annihilation after this life (materialism)

The expression "will-to-live" (tanhā) signifies, in the Buddhist sense, not only what is generally understood as the *conscious* will, but that innate desire for sensate life, partly conscious and partly unconscious, which is inherent in all beings, it is the totality of all selfish endeavours, emotions, desires, inclinations, and aversions, directed to the preservation of material existence and the attainment of pleasure and enjoyment, as well as the desire for annihilation The reader should always bear in mind this meaning of the word

One can terminate this otherwise never-ending

succession of births and deaths only by the relinquishment of this desire, by the suppression of the craving for individual existence in this or another world, or for annihilation This is deliverance, emancipation, the way to eternal peace

That which prevents our relinquishing this desire and attaining deliverance is our ignorance, our infatuation, our want of insight into the real nature of things

Ignorance (avijjā) is that innate, erroneous way of looking at things, in consequence of which we consider the fleeting, vain, ever-becoming and dissolving world of phenomena to be the true reality, and therefore cling to it eagerly, whilst we regard the eternal, imperishable, never-becoming nor dissolving, as a mere chimera But he in whom true insight has arisen knows: this life is no real being, but an incessant becoming and dying, and fresh becoming, a perpetual change of all material, moral, and mental conditions amidst constant struggle and suffering

The knowledge of the Four Noble Truths of Buddhism leads us to the suppression of this desire

In the words of the Buddha Himself. "It is through not understanding and grasping the Four Noble Truths, oh Brethren, that we have had to wander so long in this weary path of re-birth, both you and I And what are these Four? The Noble Truth about Suffering, The Noble Truth about the Cause of Suffering, the Noble Truth about the Cessation of Suffering, and the Noble Truth about the

Path which leads to the Cessation of Suffering. But when these four Noble Truths are fully grasped and known, then desire (tanhā) is destroyed, and the succession of re-births ceases

" Now this, oh Brethren, is the Noble Truth about Suffering Birth is suffering, old age is suffering, disease is suffering, death is suffering, separation from beloved objects is suffering, union with the unpleasant is suffering, unsatisfied desire is suffering ; in short, sensate existence by its very nature is suffering

" This, oh Brethren, is the Noble Truth about the Cause of Suffering Verily, it is this thirst (tanhā), the craving for sensate existence and enjoyment which leads from re-birth to re-birth, seeking satis faction now in this form, now in another It is the craving for the gratification of the passions, the craving for individual happiness and enjoyment in the present life or hereafter, or the craving for annihilation after this life

" This, oh Brethren, is the Noble Truth about the Cessation of Suffering Verily, it is the complete destruction of this thirst (tanhā), of the craving for sensate existence and enjoyment, or for annihilation. This desire must be conquered, got rid of, relinquished, harboured no longer

" This, oh Brethren, is the Noble Truth about the Path which leads to the Cessation of Suffering · Verily, it is the Noble Eightfold Path, discovered by me, whose parts are called Right Views, Right

Aspirations, Right Speech, Right Actions, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, Right Meditation"

"There are two extremes, oh Brethren, which he who strives for deliverance ought not to follow, on the one hand, the craving for the gratification of the passions and sensual pleasures is low, mean, degrading, and ruinous, it is the way of the worldly-minded, on the other hand, the practice of self-mortification and asceticism is gloomy, painful, and useless The Middle Path only, discovered by the Tathāgata, avoids these two extremes, opens the eyes, bestows insight, and leads to freedom, to wisdom, to full enlightenment, to Nirvāna"

The Non-Buddhist will not easily perceive the amount of profound knowledge and religio-philosophical truths contained in these few sentences from the sermon of Benares Repeated and earnest meditation thereon is therefore to be recommended Nobody can expect thoroughly and correctly to understand the true nature of existence, and the sublime Doctrine of the Buddha, before he has completely penetrated the meaning and significance of the Four Noble Truths, and comprehended their full import

Nirvāna is a state of mind and heart in which all desire for sensate life, or for annihilation, all egotistic craving, has become extinct, and with it every passion, every grasping desire, every fear, all ill-will, and every sorrow It is a state of perfect inward peace,

accompanied by the imperturbable certainty of having attained deliverance , a state words cannot describe, and which the imagination of the worldling tries in vain to picture to himself Only one who has himself experienced it knows what Nirvāna is

Nirvāna is synonymous with salvation or deliverance It is the deliverance attainable already in this life, the total annihilation of lust, hatred, and delusion But only very few can attain Nirvāna in the present birth Most men have so defective a mental and moral nature, as the result of their deeds in former lives, that they require many re-births before they have perfected themselves sufficiently to gain release, But every one who earnestly strives can gain a re-birth under more favourable conditions

In spite of the correct explanation of Nirvāna given by eminent scholars long ago, there still exist among most Europeans and Americans strange ideas concerning it Nirvāna, literally translated, means to be extinguished, to be blown out as a flame is blown out by the wind, or extinguished for lack of fuel From this the inference has been drawn by some that Nirvāna signifies nothingness This is an erroneous opinion On the contrary, Nirvāna is a state of the highest spiritualisation, of which, indeed, no one who is still fettered by earthly ties can have an adequate conception What is it, then, that is extinguished or blown out in Nirvāna ? Extinguished is the " will-to-live," the craving for sensate existence and enjoyment in this or another world , extinguished

is the delusion that material possessions have any intrinsic or lasting value Blown out is the flame of sensuality and desire, forever blown out the flickering will-o'-the-wisp of the "ego," or "I." It is true that the perfect saint, the Arahan (for only such a one can attain Nirvāna already in this life), continues to live in the body, for the results of error and guilt in former births, which have already begun to operate, and are presenting themselves just now as a living organism in temporality, cannot be suppressed ; but the body is perishable, soon the hour arrives when it passes away Then nothing remains which could give rise to a new birth, and the Arahan, the righteous man perfected, passes on to the Eternal Peace, the ulterior Nirvāna—Parinirvāna

It is not possible to form any idea of Parinirvāna. It is beyond all knowledge, beyond all conception It cannot be said that it is, or that it is not, because no forms of existence are applicable to Parinirvāna One can only say that it is final emancipation, eternal rest and peace

"There is, oh Disciples, a state where there is neither earth nor water, neither air nor light, neither infinity of space nor infinity of time, neither any form of existence nor nothingness, neither perception nor non-perception, neither this world nor that world, neither death nor birth, neither cause nor effect, neither change nor stability There is, oh Disciples, an unborn, unoriginated, uncreated, unformed Were there not, there would be no escape from the world

of the born, originated, created, formed" Thus spake the Master

Parinirvāna, in the sense of other religions, and of scientific materialism, is indeed complete annihilation, complete dissolution of the individuality, for nothing remains in Parinirvāna which in any way corresponds to *the human conception of existence* But from the point of view of one who has attained to the state of the Arahan, it is rather this world with all its phenomena which is "nothingness," a reflected image, an iridescent bubble, a terrifying dream, and Parinirvāna is the entrance into the real existence, into the eternal, unchangeable, imperishable, where there is no diversity, no strife, and no suffering It is the Peace which passeth all understanding

Our re-birth depends solely upon ourselves, entirely upon our inner nature, our will This craving desire (tanhā) based on ignorance (avijjā), which pervades us all and forms the essence of our being, is the real creative power, it is what other religions personify as god, it is the cause of our existence and our re-birth, and in truth is the creator, preserver and destroyer of all things—the real trinity

The student of Buddhism must again be expressly reminded not to confound the "will-to-live," that is to say, our innate love and desire for sensate life or attachment to existence, with the conscious will The conscious will constitutes only a small part of our entire will, namely, that which rises into our brain-consciousness, the larger part of this will is

perceived only very indistinctly by most men, and by plants and animals not at all It manifests itself as a blind, instinctive desire, as a stubborn love for existence, as a tendency to go in quest of everything that renders existence painless and agreeable, and to flee from everything that menaces or hurts it Many so-called pessimists, for example, who pretend to scorn life, and whose conscious will actually rejects their present state, are often under the erroneous impression that they have conquered the will-to-live But this is not the case, for their selfishness, their attachment to pleasures and enjoyments, their want of self-denial and kindliness, their cynicism and bitterness, prove that the unconscious desire for sensate life is still active within them, and will certainly lead them to a new re-birth The same observation applies partly to the followers of all religions They contemn this terrestial life because their faith requires it, but yearn the more fervently for individual, continued existence in heaven or paradise The real extinction of the will-to-live shows itself in complete unselfishness and self-denial, patience in suffering, the absence of all passions (anger, hatred, envy, animosity, covetousness, sensuality, haughtiness, avarice, vanity), perfect equanimity, sincere benevolence towards all living beings, and the renunciation of any reward for good deeds in this world or one beyond (heaven or paradise)

The nature and quality of our re-birth are dependent upon ourselves—upon our karma

Karma is our action, our merit and guilt in a moral sense If our merit preponderates, we are reborn in a higher scale of being, or as man in favourable circumstances But if we are heavily laden with guilt, the necessary consequence is a re-birth in a lower state and full of suffering

Our actions are certainly the natural result of our inborn individual character But this inborn character is nothing else than the product of our karma, *i e*, of all our thoughts, words, and deeds in former lives

"All that we are is the result of what we have thought, it is founded on our thoughts, it is made up of our thoughts If a man speaks or acts with an evil thought, pain follows him as the wheel follows the foot of the beast of draught If a man speaks or acts with a pure thought, happiness follows him like a shadow that never leaves him"

"My action is my possession, my action is my inheritance, my action is the womb which bore me My action is the race to which I am kin, my action is my refuge"

We are in every moment of our existence exactly what we have made ourselves to be, and we enjoy and suffer only what we deserve

This is Karma—the law of causality, the fundamental law of all that happens Just as in the physical and material world, so also in the moral and spiritual sphere, every cause of necessity produces exactly its corresponding effect No living being can evade this

law of nature; even the highest "gods" are subject to it. On this law depends the physical as well as the moral world order, the equalizing justice in the life of man and in the universe

Strict, immutable justice rules the whole realm of animate and inanimate nature Of necessity every bad and every good deed bears its fruit No grace of a personal god can save the evil-doer, tortured by the pangs of conscience, from the consequences of his bad actions, no arbitrary will of a ruler of heaven and earth can curtail the merited reward of a good man

"Not in the boundless distances of space, not in the midst of the sea, not in the deepest mountain chasms, is there a spot where one can escape the result of one's evil deed"

With those who deny the moral constitution of the world, we do not dispute It is a question of a fundamental truth which cannot be proved, but must be felt and seen by intuition. He who occupies the standpoint of the mass of the people which sees in man only the product of nature, which he in reality is from a purely physical point of view, knows only one-half of the world—the outer one But, to him who is capable of looking deep enough into the core of things, nature reveals itself as *our production*, as the reflection of our inner being. Therefore it can only result according to our inner constitution, and one man will perceive the working of an equalizing justice and of a higher harmony, where another sees

only wild chaos, the sport of blind chance and glaring disharmony Thus here also everything, after all, depends on the degree of our insight and moral development

Tanhā is the cause which produces our existence and re-birth in general, *Karma* is that which decides the manner and condition of our existence and re-birth, *i e*, our form, our disposition, the world in which we live, our joys and sorrows Karma is our action, our individual character, and at the same time that which other religions call a god's dispensation, providence, or "fate"

It is one of the most difficult tasks to give a correct conception of karma to a European or American, who is brought up in an entirely different way of viewing things, it is hardly possible to do so in a few words, for it means penetrating into one of the deepest and most far-reaching, fundamental doctrines of Buddhism. Much will have been gained if the student constantly keeps it in mind that karma is not a force working from *without* (as, for instance, a god), but one dwelling *within*, in the heart of every living being He who is able to think profoundly enough will finally arrive at the point where for him, karma, our actions, our individual character, our "fate," and the moral world order, are one and the same

Man is not reborn only on this earth. There are innumerable inhabited bodies in boundless space, on which there live beings, some less and some more

highly developed than men. In all these worlds a re-birth may take place All are subject to continual mutations, like our earth Constant change reigns in the whole of animate and inanimate nature. Heavenly bodies originate, develop, and pass away—such is the order since eternity But the world did not originate out of nothing Never can *something* be produced, or originate, out of *nothing* There is no god-creator upon whose grace or will the existence of the world depends Everything originates and develops by and out of itself, by virtue of its own will (tanhā) and according to its inner nature and condition (karma) Only the ignorance of man has invented a personal god-creator The Buddhists, however, absolutely reject the belief in a personal god, and consider the doctrine of a creation out of nothing a delusion

"Creation" is for the Buddhist only the renewal of an extinct world or system of worlds The destructions of worlds are caused by forces of nature and catastrophes of various kinds, but they always remain confined to a small part of the universe at one time Such destructions and renewals of heavenly bodies take place continually in immeasurable space. Modern European science stands in this respect—as far as the outward circumstances are concerned—exactly at the point which the Buddhists have occupied for the last 2,500 years

Buddhism does not intend to teach natural science, it does not concern itself with the outward condition

of things, but with their inner being, and therefore stands neither in a hostile nor a dependent relation in regard to science The educated Buddhist occupies a perfectly unprejudiced position concerning natural science; he examines its results, and accepts, uninfluenced by religious scruples, such of its teachings as appear to him correct. Hence European scholars have always found a friendly reception and ready hearing in Buddhist countries The Buddhist knows that science, like all earthly things, is changeable, progresses continually, and can teach many useful and great things to-day which were unknown in the time of the Buddha, but that, on the other hand, nothing can be discovered, no matter how far scientific research may progress, which could contradict the words of the Buddha Science teaches us to find our way in the maze of phenomena, and to subject the material world, it enlightens the understanding, and makes the mind susceptible of higher knowledge But the Eternal Truth which the Buddha proclaimed, leads to consummation and deliverance, beyond the material world He who has completely apprehended and thoroughly grasped the Four Noble Truths may do without science, for the most extensive scientific knowledge, from the point of view of that higher wisdom, still belongs to the nescience (avijjā) of the material, the finite and the transitory, and does not in itself lead to salvation, to deliverance.

The Buddha taught nothing of the beginning or end of the universe, because this knowledge transcends

the power of the human intellect; and, even if it could be gained and taught in words, would not advance man in his mental and moral development, because it does not lead to the cessation of suffering, to salvation, to deliverance, to Nirvāna Imagination, intellect, abstract reasoning, will for ever vainly endeavour to conceive or think of a beginning of time, a limit of space, an origin of existence of the universe and of individuality

An explanation of the ultimate secrets of existence is impossible, because no form of finiteness, to which thoughts and language also belong, can express the infinite, no temporal definitions the timeless, nor can thinking, resultant from the chain of causality, grasp the uncaused, the self-existent And where this has nevertheless been attempted in other religions it has only led to useless speculations, vain assertions, fanciful fictions, and to strife, misunderstandings; yea, to war, murder, and horrors of all kinds, and has therefore produced error, evil, and suffering, instead of truth, happiness, and peace. Hence the Buddha put aside all such questions, and also forbade His disciples to occupy themselves with them

"Oh Disciples, do not think thoughts such as the worldly-minded do, the world is eternal, or the world is not eternal, the world is finite, or the world is infinite Concentrate your thoughts rather on suffering, on the cause of suffering, on the cessation of suffering, on the Path which leads to the cessation of suffering."

"Without beginning or end, oh Disciples, is this Samsāra Undiscernable is the beginning of beings who, involved in ignorance, and driven on by the will-to-live (tanhā), stray and wander about What do you think is more · the water in the four great oceans, or the tears which have flowed and been shed by you, since you have been wandering about on this long road, wailing and lamenting, because ye hated what fell to your lot, and loved what did not fall to your lot? The death of father, mother, wife, brother, sister, children, the loss of kin, of property, the torments of disease—all these ye have suffered since time immemorial, and on account of these more tears have been shed by you than here is water in the four great oceans"

These riddles we shall never solve so long as we are individuals fettered by the desire of life But every one who has grasped the Buddha's teaching, and lives conformably to it, can gain deliverance from the fetters of finiteness, and attain enlightenment and emancipation Then, in the light of universal knowledge, the essence of things will unveil itself to him, and all those enigmas will disappear with which his intellect, limited by desire, at present vainly grapples He must have only an earnest desire for perfection, and must enter upon the Noble Eightfold Path with firm resolution

"Resist bravely, oh Samanera, the stream of passions, drive away all cravings When thou hast understood the non-reality of all that has come into

existence, then thou hast become a knower of the eternal."

This can be done in the right manner by devoting all one's energies to the attainment of the highest goal, according to the example of the Blessed One Everyone is able to do so who earnestly wills it: but the majority do not want to renounce the world and its illusory enjoyments

Many a one will make but little perceptible progress in the present life, even with the best intentions, because too much evil karma of former lives obstructs his way But instead of growing discouraged, and giving up the struggle, he should strive all the more zealously for inner purification, and, in spite of his ill-success, not waver in his resolution to obtain moral perfection Only thus can he overcome the still powerful unfavourable karma, so far as to approach his goal under better outer and inner conditions, if not in this, then in the next birth As in the physical and material sphere, so also in the mental and the moral, the only guarantees for success are earnest determination, courage, patience, and indefatigable perseverance We must never forget even a Buddha needed six years of uninterrupted exertion to attain wisdom and deliverance

For him who remains in the worldly life it is possible to attain perfection and deliverance, but it is extremely difficult

The Upāsakas, those who remain in the worldly life, only with the greatest difficulty become Arahan,

as there are so many obstacles and temptations in the way However, it is not the yellow robe, nor the outward observance of the laws which distinguishes the Bhikkhu from the Upāsaka, but solely the disposition, the purity, the insight Hence one can lead the life of a Bhikkhu without having entered the Order by a formal act of admission

" He who has calmed his heart and restrained his senses, who lives in chastity and peaceableness with all beings, who is forbearing towards everyone, he is in truth a Bhikkhu, though he wear not the garb of one "

The Upāsakas, or lay followers, are distinguished from the Bhikkhus in that they take only the five general vows, and try to the best of their power to live up to the precepts of virtuous conduct and benevolence , they remain in the world, and faithfully perform their duties as members of a family and as orderly citizens The Bhikkhus, however, renounce the world completely, join the Brotherhood of the Elect, take the Ten Vows, and regulate their lives entirely according to the rules contained in the Vinaya

The five Vows of the Upāsakas are .

I take the vow—

(1) Not to kill or injure any living being.

(2) Not to take anything which does not belong to me or has not been given to me voluntarily.

(3) To abstain from all sexual excess and incontinence.

(4) Not to lie, deceive, or slander.

(5) To abstain from all intoxicants and excitants

The first and foremost of these vows comprises " all living beings," not only man. He who wantonly kills, injures, or torments animals is no adherent of the Enlightened One, and cannot attain a favourable re-birth

The Precepts of Righteousness and Benevolence are ·

Parents shall train their children in virtue, restrain them from vice, give them a proper education, assist them by word and deed, not withhold their inheritance

Children shall obey their parents, faithfully perform all filial duties, not squander their parents' property, support them in old age and infirmity, make themselves worthy in all particulars to be their heirs, and always honour their memory

The Pupil shall respect the teacher, obey him, show his esteem by word and deed, hearken attentively to his teaching

The Teacher shall train the pupil in all that is good and true, instruct him in the arts and sciences to the best of his ability, watch over him

The Husband shall treat his wife with love and respect, be faithful to her, esteem her above all others, give her suitable clothes and ornaments

The Wife shall keep her household in good order, receive friends and relatives hospitably, be faithful to her husband, take care of his property, and fulfil

all the duties of a housewife with diligence *

The Friend shall treat the friend and companion as he would wish to be treated by him, always show him kindness and civility, watch over his interests, share his property with him, keep him from imprudent steps, offer him a refuge in time of need and danger, and stand faithfully by him in misfortune

The Master shall care for the welfare of his servants and assistants by not exacting any work from them which exceeds their strength, he shall give them suitable food and wages, support them in sickness, let them have a share in unusual profits and allow them sufficient holidays

Servants and Assistants shall always do their work cheerfully and willingly, shall be satisfied with what they receive therefor, and not speak ill of their master †

The Lay Follower of Buddhism shall show the Bhikkhus his friendly disposition in thought, word, and deed, welcome them in his house, and supply them with what they need for the maintenance of their bodies

The Bhikkhu shall caution the lay followers against wrong-doing, shall exhort them to virtue, cherish kind feelings towards them, instruct them in the

* Buddhism raised the status of women in India to one of practical equality with men It was only in later times, since the decline of the Buddhist influence in India, that the position of women sank to its present inferiority under the influence of Brahmanical Hinduism In all the Buddhist countries to-day women enjoy a far higher social position and freedom than in any other Oriental countries

† The economic and social conditions of Ancient India differed widely from those of modern times.

Doctrine, clear up their doubts, and show them the way to a happy re-birth.

The benefits following the observance of the Five Vows and the Precepts of Righteousness are both immediate and future He who keeps them faithfully is held in respect on earth by all good men, remains free from many sorrows and sufferings, possesses an easy conscience, and lives in peace with his neighbours His wisdom will grow, and he will be re-born into more favourable circumstances But still higher merit is gained by him who observes the Eight Vows (atthanga-sila) for a longer or a shorter time, but at least on the " sabbath " (uposātha) *

The Eight Vows are the five mentioned above and the following three:

I take the vow—

(6) Not to eat at improper times (*i.e*, not to take solid food after mid-day)

(7) To abstain from dancing, the singing of worldly songs, from attending plays or musical performances, in short, to abstain from all worldly and distracting amusements

(8) To avoid the use of ornaments of every kind, of perfumes, fragrant oils or ointments, of anything that tends to vanity

The vow to abstain from all sexual excess is replaced during the time of Atthanga-sila† by one

* In Buddhist countries the uposātha days correspond with the four phases of the moon—the new moon, the first quarter, the full moon, and the last quarter

† The Buddhist "Lent," which begins on the full moon day of July and ends on the full moon day of October

exacting complete chastity even by married people.

The observance of the Eight Vows serves as a very salutary practice for the lay adherents. He who has never imposed upon himself any restraint will certainly not be able to conceive how much our mental and moral powers are strengthened by voluntary abstinence, and how we are thus qualified for higher things

The Ten Vows (dasa-sila) of the Samaneras (novices) are the eight already enumerated and the following two.

I take the vow—

(9) To abandon the use of luxurious beds, to sleep on a hard, low, couch, and to avoid all and every worldliness

(10) Always to live in voluntary poverty

These vows can be broken in three ways: in thought, and word, and deed.

In order to gain emancipation we go, not the way of renunciation, but the way of deliverance. He who considers the abandonment of earthly possessions, pleasures, and enjoyments, as a painful renunciation, is still far from true wisdom But he who views this abandonment as a deliverance from worthless, vain, and troublesome things, from oppressive fetters, looks upon it from the right point of view

It is a delusion, cherished by the sensual man to his own affliction, engrossed by the craving for sensate existence and enjoyment, that the satisfaction of desires and inclinations affords true happiness All desires are appeased for a short time only by their

attainment, but always awaken anew, and all the more strongly the more one yields to them. Every gratified desire produces a new one, and no final satisfaction is conceivable in this way Moreover, we must take into account all the unavoidable disappointments and failures, the conflict, struggle, and strife with our fellow beings who are pursuing the same aim But this incessant struggle can only be carried on at the expense of our bodily and mental forces Therefore, the more we indulge our desires and inclinations, the more they increase, the more at the same time our forces, which are our only means of enjoyment, diminish Increase of desires, and the simultaneous decrease of the means for their gratification—this is the inexorable law of nature to which such perverse striving is subject It must, therefore, be evident to everyone who earnestly reflects upon it, that it is foolish to pursue sensual enjoyments, as the ardently yearned for happiness can never be gained

The Buddha of His own merit cannot absolve us from the consequences of our actions Nobody can be saved by another. No god and no saint, so teach the Scriptures, can protect one from the effects of his own deeds Every one must work out his own salvation The Buddha has merely shown the way for every one to become his own saviour

No vicarious atonement is possible, because justice is the fundamental principle of all that takes place, because in the universe there reigns strict conformity

to law, and not the arbitrary will of a personal god. That the guiltless one should be able to take upon himself the sins of the guilty, and that the evil-doer should be released from the consequences of his deed by grace, is a foolish assumption which rests upon a complete misconception of the moral constitution of the world. Guilt and suffering, merit and reward, always balance each other.

"It is thou who doeth evil, it is thou who sufferest for it. By thine own exertion thou gainest merit, by thine own exertion thou gettest rid of thy guilt. Suffering, as well as salvation, depend upon thine own doing. Nobody can disburden another."

One acquires merit in a moral sense by faithfully observing the vows in thought, word, and deed, by zealously striving for perfection; but, above all, by righteousness and benevolence towards all living beings.

It is, however, by no means the visible deed which determines one's deserts. No outward action is meritorious in itself. The merit depends upon the inner motive, on the purity of the thought. The action is only so important, because it is the outward, visible sign of the disposition, of the tendency of the will and mind of the individual.

For example. Many a one gives much money for the support of the Brotherhood, the relief of poverty, or for the public institutions, and yet gains very little, or nothing, for his true welfare; because he does everything with the sole purpose of obtaining honour

and credit among his fellow men Such a one has received his reward already in this life by the honour conferred on him, and has gained no merit He, on the other hand, who acts kindly and charitably with the object of promoting his self-perfection, and of obtaining a favourable re-birth, gains merit, the fruit of which he will enjoy in a future life But the highest merit is gained by him who does good to his fellow beings without expectation of reward in this or a later life, out of profound insight into the unity of life and into the sorrows of the world, out of sincere pity, out of pure good-will, undefiled by any selfish motive Such a one is near to Nirvāna

To gain true merit we must conquer selfishness, avoid evil, do good

" To shun evil, to do good, to purify the heart from passions—that is the teaching of all the Buddhas—Not to blame anybody, not to injure anybody, to practise abstemiousness according to the Doctrine, to be moderate in eating and in drinking, to turn one's thoughts to the highest—that is the teaching of all the Buddhas."

A good action is every action done with a pure intention of furthering the welfare of other living beings, and to alleviate their suffering

A bad action is every action done in the intent to injure or harm other living beings, or to cause pain to them.

A selfish action is one in which the doer considers only his own welfare, unconcerned whether he there-

by causes pain to others.

There are actions which subserve only one's welfare, without harming others Such actions cannot be called either good or bad. If they further the temporal well-being of the doer, they are prudent ; if they promote his self-perfection, they are wise , but if they harm him in body or mind, they are foolish.

We have *duties* to others , but we have also *rights* to ourselves, and to the free development of our powers Buddhism expressly recommends the exercise of these rights, and the attention to one's own well-being in a reasonable way

Religious fanatics and moral rigorists assert that every action which is done with a view to one's own welfare is selfish, and therefore without moral value We do not agree with such exaggerations The care for one's own well-being is by no means objectionable, so long as it remains within proper limits Selfishness, in a morally reprehensible sense, commences only where one's well-being is pursued, regardless of that of others To be sure, nobody can go through life without scruples, and the good and just man will often hesitatingly pause on his way, and get perplexed, when his own rights and his duties to others seem to conflict In such moments, no dogma, no written moral precepts, can guide us aright, but only clear insight and a pure mind Let everyone constantly remember · there are no duties to gods, ancestors, or hallowed errors of any kind , only to our fellow beings, who also fight in the struggle for existence, and to

posterity. He who unselfishly employs his powers for the weal of humanity, for a great ideal, for the propagation of truth and light, possesses an unerring guiding star which will never let him go astray. But not everyone can strive for the highest; vigour and aptitude vary in different individuals Therefore, let it be a consolation to us that honest endeavour, conscientiousness, and a sense of duty, have opportunities, even in the smallest sphere of activity, to manifest themselves in a helpful manner; that everyone can be of service to others by serving in the best sense himself In proportion as we elevate and perfect ourselves mentally and morally, we are enabled to help our fellow men, and to be of use to them All real culture comes from within—not from without—and every improvement of the world must begin with self-improvement Keeping mankind in view, let everyone work at his own perfection, and let him consider that nobody can further his own weal at the cost of his fellow men, that, on the other hand, only *that* benefits mankind which in the highest sense has been done for oneself

It is wrong to retaliate upon an enemy who has caused us harm and suffering It is wrong to requite evil with evil, and unworthy of a noble man striving for perfection "He defrauded me, beat me, ruined me He who harbours such thoughts will never cease to hate For hatred is not overcome by hatred, hatred is overcome by love. This is an eternal law."

"Overcome the angry by gentleness, the wicked

by kindness, the miser by liberality, the liar by truth."

The lay follower may go in quest of his just dues in a legal way, but it must be done without hatred or bitterness towards his opponent But this does not become a Bhikkhu who has renounced the world He leaves his offender to his karma, he forgives and pities him, for the aggressor will have to atone for his wrong in this or the next birth, and that so much more severely the more he exults and the more stubbornly he closes his eyes to the higher wisdom.

The inveterate evil-doer, however, does not suffer *for ever* for his bad deeds. No temporal guilt, no matter how great, can bring on everlasting punishment That would be unjust, yea, a cruel system of the world which would allow this But the moral world order which the Buddha promulgated rests upon equity, and therefore every evil deed receives only its adequate temporal reaction, as retribution, in this or the following life

Reward and punishment, merit and guilt, good and bad, are, properly speaking, only mataphorical expressions, suited to the limited human comprehension The world order, at bottom, knows neither reward nor punishment, merit nor guilt, justice nor injustice Everything is the necessary and natural consequence of our own right or wrong knowledge, volition, and doing A correct knowledge of the laws of our own nature, and of the universe, and obedience to these physical, moral, and mental laws, is therefore the only way to deliverance from suffering, and to the

attainment of the eternal peace, Nirvāna, that sublime goal which lies beyond good and evil, guilt and suffering, beyond all thinking and conception, and is exempt from all laws and forms of finiteness

There is no such thing as positive or absolute evil Everything temporal is relative, including things morally good or bad. Both expressions denote merely the higher or lower degree of egotism of a living being, whose roots are the will-to-live and ignorance No living being, no matter how deeply it may be sunk in selfishness and ignorance, is excluded from the possibility of emancipation, of salvation Every one can attain wisdom and perfection, *if he really strives for them*, though perhaps only through a long series of re-births On the other hand, no being, no matter how good and noble, is certain of emancipation until he has reached Nirvāna As long as the least craving for life, and the least remainder of ignorance exist, a relapse may always occur For all action, good as well as bad, remains in the sphere of finiteness, and does not lead beyond To Nirvāna lead only the separation from action, and the complete overcoming and total annihilation of the will-to-live, through true knowledge.

" Separation from action " does not mean complete inactivity, but *not to do anything from selfish motives.* Unselfish actions in the service of others do not adhere to us ; we are freed from an action which we do solely with regard to others who require our advice, or comfort, or our help, without the least purpose of

temporal benefit or hope of reward hereafter. It does not increase our karma.

"Knowledge," in the Buddhist sense, does not signify the outer knowledge of the intellect, which has no influence on a man's character, but that intuitive penetration, that profound insight into the world riddle and the enigma of man, based upon outer and inner experience, whereby is brought about a complete change in the manner of thinking and feeling, a total inner transformation.

There is neither a hell nor a heaven in the sense of the Christians, Jews, and Mohammedans. But there are dark worlds of suffering and despair into which no ray of the redeeming light penetrates. Instead of worlds, they might be called *states*. That which subjectively is felt as a state of mind presents itself to the senses and the outer consciousness as its objective counterpart, as a world. The one corresponds to the other. There, he who is heavily burdened with guilt must abide, until he has expiated the fruit of his evil deeds. Thereupon his good karma (his merit) leads him to re-birth as man, where he again has his opportunity to gain knowledge, and by righteous conduct to get to the path of deliverance. Just so, there are also bright worlds of joy, where the good man, who is not yet ripe for emancipation, enjoys the fruit of his meritorious actions. But when this fruit has been consumed, he also must return to earth as man, as there still remains the will-to-live and uneradicated karma. He who has

understood the Four Noble Truths will therefore long neither for earthly happiness, nor for life in the bright heavenly worlds, but only for deliverance, Nirvāna For, as long as individuality is not destroyed, so long will suffering, birth, and death not be overcome Even angels and gods (such may the beings in the higher spheres be called) are subject to becoming, decay, and re-birth But everything changeable is sorrowful Hence · "Better than sovereignty over the earth, better than life in the heavenly worlds, better even than dominion over the whole universe, is the first step on the road to deliverance"

The iniquity of parents is not visited upon the children This would contradict justice and equity No one need suffer for the guilt of others The superstitious assumption that a god can avenge the sins of the fathers upon innocent children rests upon an entire misconception of the moral constitution of the world

We see that children resemble their parents throughout in bodily and mental qualities, that they inherit from them good and bad tendencies, health and sickness This does not contradict the doctrine of karma, it confirms it For just because our inner being, our individual character, resembles that of our parents, we become their children. Because at the moment of our re-birth the elective affinity we had for our parents was greater than for any other living beings, just, therefore, did we incarnate through

them. Like causes produce like effects; the inner conformity in the nature of parents and children, therefore, necessarily expresses itself in their outward appearance, their inclinations, and their "fate," It is only the doctrine of karma and re-birth which shows us clearly the inner necessity and moral justice of the law of heredity, which in our materialistic science has led to such strange and erroneous conclusions

The frequently appearing dissimilarities between parents and children are explained by precisely the same law For, in spite of the elective affinity with their parents, children are independent individualities; they have their own karma, and therefore, besides the qualities in agreement with those of their parents, must possess many which appertain to them alone Now, if just these latter chiefly reach development in this life, the children appear very unlike their parents In fact, the strongest affinity between parents and children exists only in the moment of procreation, from birth every being follows its separate course of development, which often leads far away from that of the parents

It is in accordance with the karmic law that the good and righteous so often must suffer on earth. They atone for the as yet uneradicated guilt with which they burdened themselves in former lives It is the consequence of unfavourable karma which just at this time reaches maturity.

Thus, the bad and unrighteous often enjoy the

highest consideration and all the pleasures of this earth It is the consequence of their merit in former births, their favourable karma. But, after having enjoyed the fruit of their merit, they will also have to taste the bitter fruit of their misdeeds in this or subsequent births

"An evil deed is not like fresh milk which quickly curdles, but is as a smouldering fire under the ashes Unseen, it glows, and then suddenly bursts forth to destroy the delusive structure of happiness in which the evil-doer imagines himself safe"

The inequality in the outward course of life on this earth, the apparent injustice in that good men are often afflicted with dire suffering, while the bad are living in splendour and joy, is, for every thinking being, a proof of the moral necessity of re-birth

That this vast and admirable universe cannot be a play of blind chance, but is only the result of forces acting according to law, that causality and compensating justice bear the same relation to each other as physical to psychical phenomena respectively, and that these are therefore in reality the same, only looked at in different ways, either from without or from within.—this is a truth which nobody can gainsay after earnest reflection and mature consideration With him who denies this truth, we do not argue For him who acknowledges it, there follows of necessity that guilt and suffering, merit and happiness, must exactly balance each other When, therefore, we see the good suffer, and the cause of this suffering

cannot be found in the actions of the present life, it must be based upon the actions of a former life Where there are prosperity and happiness, there must exist merit from a former life There is here no alternative. He who acknowledges the moral world-order is forced, if he is able to think logically, to the conclusion of the truth and reality of re-birth

There is no "chance" Only our short-sightedness, and the deficiency of our knowledge make us view the events as chance, which are not in direct connection with our present actions and intentions, and are to us entirely unexpected and incalculable If our insight into the nature of things would extend far enough, we should perceive that, in reality, all apparently fortuitous events are connected with us by a long chain of causes and effects, which of necessity determines the nature of the events, as well as the moment of their occurrence This chain of causes and effects (karma in its extended aspect) is for us immeasurable because interrupted for our perception by the change of births.

This, however, must not be construed into a belief in the inevitableness of everything that happens, and a consequent neglect to take the necessary precautions against possible accidents and dangers, to use proper medicines in case of sickness, etc Worse still would be a belief in the futility of working for one's physical, mental, and moral betterment, and a consequent apathy and disinclination to do so. This would be fatalism, as preached by the Mahommedans,

or predestination in the Christian sense This view is an extreme, and is, like all extremes, therefore condemned in Buddhism, which, as in so many other matters, also in this, enjoins a common-sense " middle way."

Thus, the unfortunate one comes to understand that he must not accuse gods or men for his sufferings, neither the world, nor luck, nor fate, much less devils and demons, but himself alone , he comes to see that the source of all his sorrow is his own wrong-doing, his own infatuation, and that a lasting, thorough remedy cannot be attained by external means, by the increase of one's comforts, but only by conversion and the striving for perfection

The fortunate one, on the other hand, is led by this conviction to true modesty, to a just and benevolent use of his position and wealth For, if he does not constantly strive to increase his merit, if he succumbs to pride and conceit, greed and hard-heartedness, then, after the fruit of his former good karma has been consumed, the consequence will be misery and suffering already in this life or in the next, while the despised poor and lowly one perhaps goes to a joyful re-birth.

Suicide provides no escape from the consequences of one's misdeeds No one can escape the karmic law , its rule is inexorable and omnipotent, and nobody can fly from it Suicide is a wrong, as all killing is strictly prohibited by the first vow every Buddhist takes It is, besides, a foolish action, as it

seeks forcibly to cut the thread of life which, of necessity, must be taken up again, and that generally under still more unfavourable circumstances than those from which the suicide tried to escape Under more unfavourable circumstances, because our sufferings are solely the consequence of our own errors and our own guilt So long, therefore, as error is not dispelled, and guilt expiated, it is not possible to attain a more favourable birth He who knows this will endure all suffering patiently, and endeavour to gain as much merit as possible by righteous conduct, sincere self-knowledge, and good deeds, so as to be worthy of a more favourable re-birth But he who foolishly tries to escape by suicide from the suffering conducive to his purification, thereby shows that he is still far from self-knowledge, and that he lacks the will to become good and wise In his blind folly, he destroys the body, this fleeting, perishable phenomenon which he takes for his true being, and thereby enters the downward path

This does not hold good, to the same extent, with every suicide, but only with those who kill themselves in order to escape the consequences of crimes committed, or out of despair that their impassioned desires have not been fulfilled. But there are also suicides which spring from noble motives For such as voluntarily depart this life from noble motives there is no entrance upon the downward path But there is always an error at the bottom of every suicide, a misinterpretation of the moral constitution

of the world, and the consequences can therefore never be favourable Only he who in this life has already attained Nirvāna, an Arahan, may leave the world voluntarily at any time, as his karma is completely exhausted. But such a one will not do so, rather thinking like Sāriputta "I do not desire death, I do not desire life, I wait until the hour arrives, like a servant awaiting his wages I do not desire death, I do not desire life, I wait until the hour arrives, conscious and alert"

That which is re-born is our "will-to-live," and our moral character These form the core of our being, and create for themselves, after the disintegration of our present body, a new body, or vehicle, corresponding exactly to their nature

The individual will-to-live, or individuality, is not that which is called "soul" The belief in an immortal soul—that is, an indivisible, eternal, indestructible entity, which has only taken up its temporary abode in the body—Buddhism considers as an error, based on ignorance of the true nature of being and of living beings Buddhism teaches no "transmigration of souls" (metempsychosis), but the new formation of the individual in the material world of phenomena, by virtue of its will-to-live (tanhā), and its moral character (karma)

The widespread belief in an immortal soul within us—that is, an individual entity endowed with knowledge, differing from others, created, or come into being, and nevertheless eternal—arises principally

from the egotistical desire for eternal, personal, continued existence. Hence this superstition is a consequence of the deluded will-to-live, and belongs to the "Ten Fetters" which chain man to existence and prevent his salvation To understand that, after all, it is the individuality, with its wants and desires, opposed to those of other individualities, which causes all suffering in the world, that, therefore, the striving for individual happiness is, according to its very nature, wrong and that it is best to relinquish it voluntarily—this is to take a great step, yea, the greatest, on the road to true knowledge. But man wants to preserve his individuality at any price; hence the popularity of those religions which promise eternal existence of the individuality; hence the never ending struggle for existence, hence all suffering, all sorrow, of which life is full, hence the difficulty of emancipation

"Individuality is a burning fire, oh disciples. And by what is it kindled? By lust, ill-will, and delusion."

The "ego" (self) is not a soul The "ego," likewise, has no lasting entity, no immaterial "substance"; but is a *condition* arising from the union of the Five Khandhas, attributes, or elements of being

The Five Khandhas are the five elements of the clinging to existence: the body (rūpa, the physical vehicle), sensation, feeling (vedanā), perception (saññā), mentality, or psychic "tendencies"

(sankhārā); consciousness (viññāna) Through the combined action of the Five Khandhas arises the conception of the multiform external world, and at the same time of the "ego" At death, the Five Khandhas become extinct, in re-birth they arise anew through the operation of tanhā and karma, and with them a new "ego," a new evanescent personality.

The being which is re-born is not the same which died, nor is it another It may seem to be another to a man still in a state of ignorance, who wrongly identifies the personal ego-consciousness with his true being He who has attained wisdom knows that his real being is his tanhā and his karma, but that the recurring ego-consciousness is only a transient phenomenon, to be compared to the torch lit by a wanderer at night to find his way When he does not need it any more, he extinguishes it, to light a new torch for a later wandering Thus, though the ego-consciousness may change, it is in a sense, by the tie of karma, always the same individuality which in one birth does the good or bad deeds, and in the next reaps the fruit of these deeds, though in the absence of any substance passing from one life to the next, it is not absolutely the same.

The individuality continues to appear in constantly recurring embodiments until perfect wisdom and moral purification, and thereafter Nirvāna, are attained Then, after the death of the last body, it becomes totally merged in Parinirvāna

We do not normally remember our former lives, because we cling too strongly to individuality, and build in every birth a new body for ourselves, whose limited faculties and organs are destined to serve only the purposes of this short life. Only he who is mentally matured has understood that our life resembles a dream, and that the awakening is deliverance.

For example, at night we have dreams. In these we are now a beggar, now a king; in one dream imprisoned, poor, menaced by sufferings and dangers; in another, favoured by fortune, and full of joy. And yet it is the same " ego " which assumes all these forms in a dream. Further, while dreaming we do not remember that we have dreamed before; but, awake, we remember the dreams of many nights. It is exactly the same with our various lives. Birth is a dream of the individual will-to-live, now frightful, now delightful. As long as we are in one of these life dreams, we do not normally remember former life dreams. The mentally and morally perfect one, a Buddha, or an Arahan, has ceased from dreaming. He is the Awakened One, and he remembers his former lives. But this knowledge arises only after the " Ten Fetters " have been completely broken off, and the final deliverance from existence is attained.

Memory belongs to the phenomenal part of our being, to the khandhas which sever their connection at death. It therefore cannot be carried over into the following birth, normally, any more than acquired

karma cannot be bribed, cajoled, or coerced Repentance is of value only in so far as it implies the keenly felt acknowledgment of our guilt, and as it incites us to make amends to the utmost of our power for the wrong and suffering which we have inflicted upon others, and henceforth to gain merit But inactive repentance and wailing contrition are entirely useless Equally useless is every outward penance, such as the taking upon oneself of any punishment, self-torture, and the like

"Not mortification, not shaving one's head, not praying, not fasting, doing penance, or living in poverty, purifies him who has not overcome desires . . What avails a shorn head, oh fool, what a garment of rags? Within thee is wickedness, but thine exterior feigns sanctity"

The true repentance of the Buddhist is shown in bravely entering the path to salvation, and the true penance in suppression of selfishness, passions, and craving desires

Mere belief in the Buddha has little value, because it is not founded upon one's own judgment and examination By mere belief nothing is gained, only conviction obtained by strenuous effort can make us free. We ought not to become *believers*, but *knowers* and *well-doers* For this the life and teaching of the Buddha are an example and a guide.

The son of Kesa, from Kālama, came to the Buddha, and said: "Master, every priest and teacher extols his belief as the only true one, and condemns that of

others as false. I am worried by doubts. I do not know whom to believe"

The Buddha answered: "Thy doubts are well-founded, oh Kesaputta, listen well to my words. Do not believe anything on mere hearsay. Do not believe traditions because they are old, and have been handed down through many generations. Do not believe anything on account of rumours, or because people talk a great deal about it Do not believe simply because the written testimony of some ancient sage is shown to thee Never believe anything because presumption is in its favour, or because the custom of many years inclines thee to take it as true Do not believe anything on the mere authority of thy teachers or priests—Whatsoever, according to thine own experience, and after thorough investigation, agrees with thy reason, and is conducive to thine own weal and welfare, as well as to those of other living beings, *that* accept as true, and shape thy life in accordance therewith"

The attitude of Buddhism in relation to the adherents of other religions is one of absolute tolerance Buddhism enjoins us to look upon all men as our brothers, of whatever race, nationality, or religion they may be, to respect the convictions of all who have other beliefs, and even to avoid disputes on religious matters Buddhism is pervaded by the spirit of perfect toleration, never has blood been shed for its propagation, it has never, after gaining ascendency, persecuted or oppressed the followers of

other religions. He who does not perceive the truth, or does not want to listen to it, only harms himself, and hence awakens the pity of the Buddhist, not his hatred.

Many take this mild disposition of the Buddhists for weakness, and say that Buddhism paralyses energy This may seem so to the deluded, for it is true that Buddhism paralyses the coarse, brutal energy which manifests itself in the mad struggle after wealth and enjoyment, in the wild, pitiless struggle for existence, in that Buddhism teaches that real happiness is not to be gained through material possessions or outward refinement, but only through mental and moral development

"To honours and riches there is a way very different from that leading to the eternal peace Hence do not yearn for honours and wealth, but only for overcoming the world"

Nevertheless, the Buddhist does not go through life without struggling, but the place of combat is changed —instead of the outer world, it is himself, and, although at peace with the world, and, therefore, apparently inactive, the Buddhist strives incessantly, putting forth all his higher and nobler faculties against the selfish impulses of his heart, and the allurements of his senses This is the energy of the true Buddhist, and this struggle is more difficult, nobler, and more profitable for mankind than the battles and victories of all conquerors and kings which history reports

"Greater than he who conquers in battle a thousand times thousand men is he who conquers himself. Verily, he is the greatest of conquerors."

"Fighters, fighters, oh Lord, we are called; in what respect are we fighters?" "We fight, oh Bhikkhus, therefore are we called fighters." "What are we fighting for, oh Lord?" "For lofty virtue, for high endeavour, for high wisdom. Therefore, oh Bhikkhus, are we called fighters."

Prayers, sacrifices, and the observance of rites and ceremonies, are not necessary for the attainment of Nirvāna. Prayer and sacrifice do not exist in the Buddhist religion. But meditation, the recital of texts, the reading of the Scriptures, the listening to discourses, and the like, are of great value, if done with devotion, as they raise and fortify the courage of the follower in hours of temptation, strengthen his confidence in his own powers and in the Doctrine, and promote mental collectedness. All religious rites have the same purpose. They are important and indispensible to the lay follower, to remind him of the true significance of life, to divert his mind from the temptations of the world, and constantly to set before him the highest goal. But he who has already entered the Path of deliverance, and, as Bhikkhu, is living only for his mental development and moral self-perfection, does not need such expedients. Earnest *meditation* on different topics takes the place in Buddhism of prayer in other religions.

To be truly kind, just, and benevolent is the highest

religiousness To him who knows this, all ceremonies and dogmas appear only as crutches for the infirm who cannot stand on their own feet. Unfortunately, most people need such mental and moral crutches. But the mentally free throw them away as soon as they feel within themselves the strength to continue their way without such artificial expedients. In this sense the Blessed One spake shortly before His decease to the Disciples . " Be your own lamp, and your own refuge Do not betake yourselves to any others Hold fast to the Truth as your refuge Do not look for refuge to anybody besides yourselves Those who now, and after my decease, will be their own lamp and their own refuge, who trust their own strength and the Truth, and who in the unremitting struggle for perfection rely on nobody but themselves, it is those among my Disciples who will reach the Highest Goal "

Buddhists offer flowers and burn incense before the statues of the Buddha, in order to give expression to their veneration and gratitude for the " Light of the World " by a visible, outward sign , and as a help to concentrate their minds on the virtues of the Buddha, and upon the impermanence of everything as symbolised by the beautiful flowers, which will soon fade Such a custom is not to be despised , but he who imagines to gain some special merit by this practice alone is mistaken

There are no " miracles " A miracle in the strict sense of the word would be an arbitrary violation of

the laws of nature by some super-human being No such thing can happen. Buddhism teaches that everything happens in conformity with law without exception. Even the highest "gods" are subject to this conformity with law*.

But there are many phenomena and events which are inexplicable to us They follow natural laws still hidden from us, but known by the Buddha in their full conformity to law Such phenomena and events may therefore only be figuratively designated as miracles

When Kevatta, a follower from Nālanda, requested the Buddha to allow His Disciples to perform a miracle of magic power for the conversion of the inhabitants of Nālanda, as customary with founders of a religion, the Exalted One answered · "I despise and reject the miracles of magic power and divination I and My Disciples gain adherents only by the miracle of instruction"

For the African negro telegraphy is a miracle, while we know the powers and laws of nature on which it depends. But the same position in which the savage finds himself in regard to telegraphy, the ignorant European or Indian occupies in the face of events which are inexplicable to him In such a

* From the Buddhist point of view, all the "order" which exists in the world arises from the simple fact that when there are no disturbing causes, things remain the same The observed grouping of things and sequence of events we speak of as the order of the world, and this is the same as saying that the world is as it is, and no more No natural law is the *cause* of the observed sequence in nature Every natural law merely describes the conditions on which a particular change is dependent A law of nature does not command that something shall take place, it merely states how something happens

case he easily believes in a miracle. As a rule, the degree of superstition of a man stands in inverse ratio to his knowledge. The less the one, the greater the other.

The principal difference between Buddhism and other religions may be stated thus: Buddhism teaches perfect goodness and wisdom without a personal god; the highest knowledge without a revelation; a moral world order and just retribution, carried out of necessity by reason of the laws of nature and of our own being; continued existence without an immortal soul; eternal bliss without a local heaven; the possibility of redemption without a vicarious redeemer; a salvation at which every one is his own saviour, and which can be attained in this life and on this earth by the exercise of one's own faculties, without prayers, sacrifices, penances, or ceremonies, without ordained priests, without the mediation of saints, and without divine grace.

The spirit and essence of the whole Doctrine may be expressed in a few words:—An ardent desire for deliverance from the fetters of sensate existence, from mental, moral, and physical bonds; an ardent desire for deliverance from suffering, death, and re-birth; *and the right instruction for attaining this goal.*

"As the broad ocean, oh Disciples, is permeated throughout by the taste of salt, so this Doctrine and Law is permeated throughout by the spirit of salvation."

"The craving for sensate life is the worst of all diseases, individuality the greatest evil He who knows this truly sees in Nirvāna the highest bliss

"This salutory advice I give unto ye all who are here assembled. Totally eradicate the craving for life (tanhā), that the god of death (Mārā) may not break you again and again, as the storm breaks the reeds

"He who is filled with the desire for life is like game in a snare Therefore, oh Bhikkhus, conquer the desire for life, and strive only for dispassionateness

"The wise man does not regard chains or ropes as fetters, but riches, honours, all that draws him down to a worldly life Therefore, he leaves all these with their sorrows and joys, and goes forth into solitude

"Renounce what lies behind thee, renounce what the future promises thee, renounce the pleasure of the present, if thou wouldst reach the further shore (of the ocean of life) Hast thou entirely freed thyself mentally, then thou wilt not again fall a prey to birth and death"

Buddhism is neither pessimistic nor optimistic Pessimism and optimism are extremes, therefore one-sided and equally distant from the truth. The Buddha taught the truth, which lies in the middle. Life is vain, sorrowful, full of errors, disappointments, bodily and mental sufferings, through birth already predestined to death This is the pessimistic side of the truth. But we are not compelled to continue this sort of existence for ever, if it no longer suits us

There is an overcoming of evil; our highest self is more powerful We can obtain deliverance and emancipation by our own exertion This knowledge inspires us with courage and confidence, and justifies an optimistic conception

The frame of mind of the Buddhist, especially that of the Bhikkhu, is therefore by no means a gloomy one He does not indulge in useless complaints about the misery of the world, or abandon himself to melancholy moods Earnest in this earnest life, but filled with serenity and confidence, he follows unswervingly the Path which leads him to that goal where all suffering and all error end His life may appear full of privations, and cheerless, to the worldly minded, the deluded; but he himself, in the consciousness of being on the road to perfection and emancipation, in the growing diminution of desires, and in the knowledge of the Truth, enjoys a beatitude which far transcends all sensual delights

"He who has recognised the value of earnest meditation, finds therein his true happiness. He rejoices in the knowledge of the Elect.

"Strive not for the vanities of this world, not for a life full of lust. He who is earnest and meditative has joys in plenty

"It is pleasant to be in the solitude of the forest: where the worlding, pursuing the pleasures of sense, finds no joys; they bloom for him who has overcome his passions

"The Bhikkhu who has the right knowledge does

not even yearn for the joys of heaven Only in the overcoming of all his desires and inclinations does he find true happiness

"Happy are those who do not hate Let us live happily then, free from hatred among those who hate. Happy are the pure Let us live happily then, pure among the impure Happy are they who are free from desires Let us live happily then, free from desires among the desiring—Happy are they who call nothing their own They are as the bright gods who live on happiness

"Health is the greatest blessing, contentment the best possession, a true friend the nearest of kin, Nirvāna the highest beatitude

"Sweet is solitude and peace of mind Sweet it is to be free from fear and desire Sweet is the draught from the cup of the Holy Doctrine

"The sight of the Elect affords joy To live with them is happiness Therefore attach thyself to the wise, to the intelligent, the learned, the meek, the passionless, the Elect In their companionship live always as the moon in the company of the stars"

All these teachings, and many others which the Buddha proclaimed, are recorded in the Scriptures (the three Pitakas).

The Scriptures were neither composed nor written by the Buddha Himself, nor by the Bhikkhus who were His immediate Disciples. It was not customary in India at that time to record in writing religious or

philosophical doctrines These were handed down orally from teacher to pupil, and most minutely impressed on his memory by continual repetition, word for word, and sentence for sentence In this manner they were transmitted from generation to generation.

All European scholars who cultivate Indian languages and philosophy agree in stating the amazing power of memory of the Indian Brahmans Max Muller, one of the greatest authorities in this field, asserted that, if suddenly all written and printed bramamical books were destroyed, their holy writings could, nevertheless, be reproduced word for word with the help of the Brahmans who know them by heart, as it is still customary with them for the teacher to transmit his knowledge orally to the pupil

This was done also with the teachings of the Buddha Not until several centuries after the Buddha's decease were the Scriptures written in the version we now possess, on palm leaves, after the third great council of the thousand Theras (the Elders of the Brotherhood), at Patāliputta, in the reign of the Emperor Asoka.

The Emperor Asoka was one of the mightiest and most humane monarchs of India He reigned from 259 to 222 before the Christian Era, was converted to the religion of the Buddha, and endeavoured to propagate Buddhism over the whole earth To this day rocks and stone pillars, on which he caused to be engraved his religious edicts, testify to the efforts of

the Emperor Asoka, and his name is still held in the highest veneration by all Buddhists He sent missionaries to most of the then accessible countries, and his son, Mahinda, and daughter, Sanghamitta, went to the Island of Ceylon and effected the conversion to Buddhism of practically all the inhabitants from the King down And it is in this island that the teachings of the Buddha have been kept up to this day, and that the most authentic text of the Scriptures has been preserved in the Pāli language

Pāli was the language of the kingdom of Magadha and adjacent countries at the time of the Buddha It is closely allied to the Sanskrit, but whilst this was reserved for the teachings of the Brahmans, Pāli was used colloquially, and the Buddha, in order to reach all classes of the population with His Doctrine, held His discourses in this language

There is no Esoteric Buddhism, that is to say, a Buddhist secret doctrine, which has not been written down, but has only been preserved by oral tradition among the Arahans The Buddha taught no esoteric doctrine, but " the road of deliverance for all," and brahmanic secrecy, mysticism, occultism, and esotericism, those lurking places of superstition and deceit, were wholly rejected by Him Only after Buddhism had spread over all India, and advanced into China and Tibet, there arose, beside the pure Doctrine, under the influence of brahmanic speculations, mystic, fantastical conceptions of the world, which must be considered a deterioration of the original Buddhism

"To two things, oh Disciples, secresy is peculiar, and not candour: to women who are in love, to priestcraft, to false doctrine Three things, oh Disciples, shine before all the world, not secretly: the moon, the sun, the teaching of the Tathagata—these three, oh, Disciples shine before all the world, not secretly."

When Ānanda asked the Buddha whether He would not, before passing away, make a last disclosure to His Disciples, the Exalted One answered: "What dost thou mean, Ānanda? Does the Brotherhood expect that of me? I have proclaimed the truth to you without making any distinction between exoteric and esoteric doctrine I am not like those teachers with the closed fist who keep back the best"

In explanation, it must be mentioned that it was not the custom of the leaders of the numerous brahmanical sects to disclose their highest knowledge to all their disciples, but only to a few favoured ones, often only at the hour of death to one whom they had destined for their successor as leader of the sect.

From the passages quoted above, there follows beyond a doubt that the Buddha did not teach any secret doctrine, and that everything to which pretended adepts give currency is an invention of later times.

As everything which has come into existence must perish, it may be asked Will the Doctrine of the Buddha also pass away? The Doctrine of the

Buddha will never pass away as long as the world exists, for its essence is Eternal Truth itself, appearing under the mundane forms of word and idea, and embodied in the person of the Light of the World. But its outward form and wording may vary. In every age of the world, numbered by thousands of years, a new Buddha is born, who proclaims the Truths of suffering and of emancipation in the form most suitable to His time

THE ORDER

(Sangha)

The Order, or Brotherhood of the Elect, means the union of all those who, as true Disciples and followers of the Buddha, have left the world, and entered upon the Noble Eightfold Path of consummation and deliverance, and those who have attained the fruit thereof

It is difficult to translate "Sangha," as it is not an "Order" in the Christian sense; but for brevity's sake this word is used, although "Brotherhood of the Elect" more nearly expresses its meaning The Sangha is the brotherly union of all Bhikkhus and Samaneras, the true Disciples and followers of the Buddha But neither for "Bhikkhu" nor "Samanera" is there an adequate English word Literally, Bhikkhu means "beggar." But the Bhikkhus are not beggars in the modern European sense, where the word has a degrading and dishonouring significance. Samanera means a novice, but it also designates a lay person who, for the purpose of spiritual development, abstains from all worldly pleasures, therefore, an ascetic in the higher sense It would perhaps be

the simplest and most expedient way to translate Bhikkhu as begging-monk ; but even this might lead to misunderstandings, for the Bhikkhus are not begging-monks in the Christian sense, as they do not take the vow of obedience to their superiors To render Bhikkhu as "priest," as several European scholars have done, will not answer at all, as the Buddhist Bhikkhus are not ordained, and enjoy no priestly prerogatives. The best translation therefore, would be the Elect, as also in the Scriptures, the Bhikkhus and the Samaneras are frequently called "Aryas" (the noble or elect), which altogether best expresses their condition and position in relation to the great mass of mankind For the Noble Eight-fold Path is not for the poor in spirit, but for the noble, the aspiring ones, who disdain the pleasures of life, and desire only wisdom and emancipation, for the spiritually strong, who can bear the Truth and live conformably with it

Every one who is free from the impediments mentioned in the Regulations is entitled to entrance into the Order, without regard to race, colour, station, or sex

The Regulations exclude from admission to the Order all those afflicted with contagious or incurable diseases ; minors without the consent of their parents or guardians , slaves and bondmen, as long as they have not been freed in a legal manner , all who are prosecuted by the authorities, as long as they have not been acquitted, or have not undergone their

punishment, debtors, as long as they have not fulfilled their obligations; and soldiers and officials of all kinds, as long as they continue in service, also those who have committed a great crime, such as parricide, etc

Admission into the Order is by the investiture with the yellow robes of the Order This "going forth" (pabbajjā) from home into homelessness, from a worldly life into the seclusion of the monastery or hermitage, constitutes the first, preliminary step The novice (samanera) has then to pass a term of probation under the supervision of a spiritual teacher (upajjāya), or guide (ācarya), whom he may himself choose among the Brethren before he is admitted as a full member of the Brotherhood

During the term of his probation, a Samanera, from the day of his investiture, takes upon himself all the obligations of the Brethren He must completely renounce all worldly activity, strictly keep the Ten Vows, devote himself zealously to the study of the Scriptures, to self-inspection and to earnest meditation, faithfully fulfil the laws and regulations of pure conduct and moral self-culture, and strive only for one goal—by resolute progress on the Noble Eightfold Path to attain Nirvāna

After the Samanera has been instructed in the correct practice of all vows, regulations, and precepts, has blamelessly concluded his term of probation, and is at least twenty years of age, there takes place his reception (upasampadā) as Bhikkhu, by the Elder, or

Superior (Thera) in a solemn assembly of the Brethren.

The Ten Vows of the Brotherhood are —

I take the vow—

(1) Not to kill or injure any living being.

(2) Not to take anything which does not belong to me or has not been freely given to me

(3) To live in perfect chastity.

(For the Bhikkhu the observance of complete chastity is essential, not however because intimate intercourse with the other sex is wrong or a sin Man, in yielding to his natural impulses, commits no wrong, so long as he does not thereby harm or injure anyone But sexual indulgence is the strongest expression of the "will-to-live," the highest expenditure of energy in the direction of the sensual-material side of existence, hence diametrically opposed to the goal of the Bhikkhu The Bhikkhu who indulges in sexual desire commits a "destruction of the bridge," he cuts off his way to deliverance for this life)

(4) Always to speak the truth, and not to lie, deceive, or slander

(5) To abstain from all intoxicating, exciting, and stupefying things

(6) To eat only at the prescribed times

(After mid-day the Bhikkhus should not take any solid food)

(7) To abstain from dancing, the singing of worldly songs, attending plays or musical performances, as well as any other worldly amusements

(8) To renounce vanity, and to abandon the use of ornaments of every kind, of perfumed waters, ointments, or oils.

(9) Not to use luxurious beds and seats, and to sleep on a hard, low couch

(10) Not to accept gold, silver, or money of any kind.

The Regulations for the Brotherhood consist of the pure and holy Precepts given by the Buddha and contained in the Vinaya

These are substantially divided into four parts

(1) Regulations which relate to outward discipline and order

(2) Directions for the proper collection and use of food, wearing apparel, and other necessaries of life

(3) Instructions for overcoming sensual desires and passions.

(4) Expedients for the attainment of higher spiritual knowledge and self-perfection

The Eight Parts of the Noble Path are

(1) *Right Views*, free from prejudice, superstition and delusion

(2) *Right Aspirations*, in other words, righteous thoughts

(3) *Right Speech*; kind, plain, truthful

(4) *Right Actions*, peaceable, righteous, benevolent, and pure

(5) *Right Livelihood*, such as neither harms nor injures any living being

(6) *Right Effort*, directed incessantly and with the exertion of all one's strength to the overcoming of ignorance, of craving desires, and of the "will-to-live," devoted only to the highest goal.

(7) *Right Mindfulness*, right presence of mind, right recollection in moments of weakness or temptation, of all resolutions taken, and of all past experiences

(8) *Right Meditation*, complete withdrawal of the senses, of perception, and thinking, from external objects, and a merging of the will in pure knowledge *

Retirement from the Brotherhood is permissable at any time after admission Neither the Buddhist Doctrine nor the Regulations of the Brotherhood know "eternal" vows or coercion He who longs for the life and pleasures of the world may confess his weakness to the Elder The Brotherhood does not restrain him, and retirement is lawfully permitted to him, without incurring thereby any disgrace or opprobrium But the Bhikkhu or Samanera who dishonours the robe he wears, and the holy community to which he belongs, by grossly transgressing his

* The Buddhist layman (upâsaka) must also shape his life and conduct in accordance with the Noble Eightfold Path The "withdrawal from the world," and entering the Order, provides the conditions suitable for the development of the higher mental and moral powers, such as the distractions, turmoil, and anxieties of the "worldly life" hardly permit Occasional periods of "retreat" for the purposes of meditation and introspection are also of great benefit to the Upâsaka whose circumstances do not permit of his entering the Order

vows, incurs the severest punishment which the Regulations allow: expulsion from the Brotherhood.

The Brethren are not permitted to choose their abode at will. They must live in monasteries (vihāras), or as hermits.

The female members of the Order (Bhikkhuni) live together in separate monasteries. Life as hermits is not permitted to them, and they are constantly subject to the supervision of the Elders of the Brotherhood.*

The relation in which the Brotherhood stands to the lay followers is simply a moral one, and is not based on any outward obligations. The Brethren are to be a living model of abstinence, self-denial, and holiness for the lay adherents. They are to preach and expound the Doctrine to the Upāsakas, and assist them with spiritual advice and succour in all circumstances where they may require encouragement or consolation, as did the Buddha whose Disciples they are.

The Lay Followers must render to the Brotherhood due respect and reverence, and provide for their maintenance—food, clothing, dwelling, etc. They thereby gain merit, and promote their own welfare in this and subsequent births.

The giving of alms to the Brethren is not an obligation for a lay follower, but it is a pleasant duty. What he gives is done voluntarily with the knowledge

* The regular Order of Bhikkhuni died out about the first century of the Christian Era, so far as the historical succession is concerned. Such Bhikkhuni as exist to-day do not form a Sangha.

that he thereby promotes his own interests. According to Buddhist Doctrine it is not the Bhikkhu who owes thanks to the lay adherent for any gift received, but the latter to the former, because he is given the opportunity to acquire merit by the practice of charity

The Brotherhood has no spiritual power over the lay followers The Buddhist Doctrine knows neither excommunication nor penance done by order of a church, nor outward correctives for lay followers. But the Brotherhood refuses all intercourse with a lay adherent who is guilty of a great moral offence, or who has slandered the Doctrine or the Order, by turning the begging bowl upside down before him, that is, declaring him unworthy henceforth of offering gifts to the Brethren

According to the Scriptures, these are the characteristics of the true Bhikkhu .—

He, who apt and willing to do what is good, longs for the state of highest peace, Nirvāna Let him be guileless, righteous, and conscientious, mild in words, kind, modest, content, of few wants, without care, calm, unpretending, without cravings Let him not do anything base, let him live conformably to the Holy Doctrine and the Regulations, in thought, word, and deed Let him strengthen within himself the knowledge of the Four Noble Truths, and let him walk irreproachably on the Noble Eightfold Path. Fortune shall not gladden, or adversity sadden him , approbation shall not elate, nor disgrace and per-

secution depress him, let him always keep the equanimity of one who is free from cravings. Let him ever bear in mind that it is not the garb that makes the Bhikkhu, not the outward observance of the Vows and Precepts, not life in solitude, poverty, and lowliness, not learning nor erudition He who is free from all sensual propensities and desires, who has a pure heart, and has conquered selfishness, he alone is a true Disciple of the Enlightened One. Let him, therefore, strive only for inward perfection, let him cultivate within himself wisdom, serenity, and benevolence. Let him deceive no one, threaten no one, despise no one, injure no one As a mother on her only child, so let him look full of pity and kindness on all beings, let him cultivate this sentiment every day and every hour As a deep mountain lake, pure and calm, so shall be the mind of him who walks on the Noble Eightfold Path To all living beings, on earth, or in worlds beyond, to the weak and to the strong, to the lowly and to the high, to the good and to the bad, to the near and to the far—to all let him be kindly disposed

And he lets his mind pervade one quarter of the world with thoughts of love, with thoughts of pity, with thoughts of sympathy, with thoughts of equanimity, and so the second, and so the third, and so the fourth And thus the whole wide world, above, below, around, and everywhere, does he continue to pervade with heart of love, with heart of pity, with heart of sympathy, with heart of

equanimity, far-reaching, grown great, beyond measure.

For he who lives in purity, free from superstition and delusion, from hope and fear, passion and desire, lust and hatred, who has completely overcome the desire for existence and annihilation, and has attained true knowledge, will make an end of suffering and re-birth, and enter into the highest

NIRVÂNA.

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